

De Balzac


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H. DE BALZAC

A FATHER'S CURSE

AND OTHER STORIES

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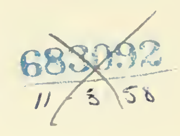


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Drawn and Etched by J. Ayton Symington

PREFACE

None of the three first stories contained in this volume (*Maître Cornélius* has been added for reasons of space), can be counted by sober criticism among Balzac's happiest work, though there are, I believe, *mèlomanes* who see some great thing in *Gambara;* and the first is unquestionably the least good.

I have never been able quite to understand, and I do not remember to have seen any special explanation of, the motives which made Balzac include *L'Enfant Maudit* in the *Comédie Humaine.* Except that it is shorter, and that the conduct of the story is of a slightly less irrational and amateurish character, it might be mistaken for one of those nightmares of the Tale of Terror kind which are so common in the works of the eminent Horace de Saint-Aubin, alias Lord R'hoone, alias M. de Vilège, alias (with several others) Honoré de Balzac in his prentice stage. Part of *L'Israëlite* is not much worse, parts of *Le Centenaire* and *L'Excommunié* are distinctly better. If this story was actually written as late as 1831, the earlier of the two dates which it carries, and in the very flood-tide of Balzac's first creative season, after he had at last found his way, it is a very odd instance of a 'throw-back' to earlier and cruder methods and manners. I should be much more disposed, in face of the crudity of the opening and other incidents and the simplicity of the general scheme, to believe that it was of much older date, and that Balzac included it among his better work with something of that well-known paternal or maternal perversity which refuses to acknowledge the actual

ugliness of offspring. But he did include it; there is no insurmountable objection to it on the score of morals; and it even has a certain additional claim to admission, as showing that earlier style, which so few have now the courage to seek in its fuller and more unchecked developments. So it appears, and perhaps some readers may think it less bad than I do. It is worth noting that, with a great alteration of circumstances, there are some touches in the opening passage of another overture, and a very excellent one, that to *César Birotteau.*

Gambara and *Massimilla Doni* belong to a section of Balzac's work much more definite in reality than the divisions which (rather *ex post facto*) he amused himself with making in it. He spent, for so busy a man, a good deal of time in Italy; and it is clear that the country exercised on his mind — a mind almost unequalled in its combination of activity and passivity — even more than the influence which it is wont to exercise on susceptible personalities. But Balzac's Italy was still an Italy of what may be called imaginative convention, and he always peopled it with persons somewhat resembling the Schedonis and Vivaldis of his early Radcliffian studies, with the ideal artist, and the equally ideal tyrants and beauties of the theatre. Anything, however, that there might be of puppetry in this scheme was vivified by the fact that he himself had an ardent, if not exactly an instructed, love for both music and painting. The former comes out in *Gambara* as it does in *Le Cousin Pons*, but in a more ideal and fantastic fashion, as it does also in *Massimilla Doni*, a very closely connected piece, but with a mixture of other kinds of interest.

The opening sketch of Andrea Morosini and that of the Italian restaurant must count among the very best things of their kind in Balzac. From what follows it is, of course, easy to say that Gambara's music-madness, with the minor and farcical echo of the cookery momomania of Giardini, is only a sort of replica *mutatis mutandis* of the greater and

finer pictures of similar frenzy in *La Recherche de l'Absolu* and *Le Chef-d'Œuvre Inconnu*. It is true, but even if it were truer than it is, it would still be interesting to see a fresh presentation of this 'Quest for the Graal,' which always had the power of exciting the novelist to his best efforts. As for the part played by the Count and Murana, all Balzac's ingenuity has not exactly succeeded in effacing its banality, and it must be regarded as a drawback to the story, which has nothing like it in the two masterpieces just referred to.

There is very little of this *feu divin* in *Massimilla Doni*, and I do not myself see any very attractive *feu d'enfer*. The musical art is little more, to speak musical language, than a 'caprice'; and the rest, to use the frank term of the last century in Balzac's country, approaches a 'cochonnerie.' Here also I may be wrong, but it certainly seems to me that Balzac had not a light hand enough for this kind of subject. He cannot get on without mixing philosophy, which sinks to the bottom, or attempts at Sternian humour, which float on the top in a fashion for which only Mr. Carlyle has been recently allowed to employ suitable metaphorical descriptions.

Nevertheless, there are good things in *Massimilla*, and the slight touches on what Balzac rightly speaks of as the dangerously hackneyed subject of Venice are excellent. He had better have joined it with *Facino Cane* as well as with *Gambara*, and perhaps it would not be an unpardonable audacity to do so on the principle referred to above.

The wide date of *L'Enfant Maudit*, 1831-36, is justified by the circumstances of its appearance. The first part of it only, which was subsequently called *Comment vécut la Mère*, appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for January 1831 in three chapters. The second, called *La Perle Brisée*, appeared five years later (October 1836) in the *Chronique de Paris*. Next year it became an *Etude Philosophique*, and ten years later was subjoined in book form to

Madame de la Chanterie. But it had already gained entrance into the *Comédie* with the more symmetrical subtitles *Comment vécut la Mère* and *Comment mourut le fils. Gambara* appeared first in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* during July and August 1837 in four chapters and a conclusion. Two years later it came out as a book with the *Cabinet des Antiques*; then, in 1849, as *Le Livre des douleurs*, with *Massimilla Doni*, *Les Proscrits*, and *Séraphita*. In 1846 it was entered in the *Comédie. Massimilla Doni* itself had meanwhile appeared in 1839 as a book with *Une Fille d'Eve.* Its subsequent history (a fragment had been published yet earlier) was that of *Gambara.*

G. S.

A FATHER'S CURSE

To the Baroness James de Rothschild

I

HOW THE MOTHER LIVED

One winter's night, at about two in the morning, the Comtesse Jeanne d'Hérouville was in such pain that, notwithstanding her inexperience, she understood that these were the pangs of childbirth; and the instinct which leads us to hope for relief from a change of position, prompted her to sit up in bed, either to consider the character of a new form of suffering, or to reflect on her situation.

She was in mortal terror, less of the risk attending the birth of her first child, — a terror to most women, — than of the perils that awaited the babe. To avoid waking her husband, who lay by her side, the poor creature took precautions which her excess of fear made as elaborate as those of an escaping prisoner. Though the pain became more intolerable every minute, she almost ceased to feel it, so intensely did she concentrate her whole strength in the effort to prop herself by resting her clammy hands on the pillow, to relieve her tortured frame from a position which left her powerless.

At the slightest rustle of the immense green silk counterpane under which she had known but little sleep since her marriage, she paused as though she had rung a bell. Compelled to watch the Count, she divided her attention between the creaking folds of the stuff, and a broad

weather-browned face whose moustache was close to her shoulder. If a louder breath than usual came through her husband's lips, it filled her with sudden fears that increased the crimson flush brought to her cheeks by her twofold suffering. A criminal who under cover of the night has reached the door of his prison and tries to turn the key he has found in some unyielding lock, without making a sound, is not more timid or more daring.

When the Countess found herself sitting up without having roused her keeper, she gave a little joyful jump that revealed the pathetic guilelessness of her nature; but the smile died half-formed on her burning lips, a reflection clouded the innocent brow, and her long blue eyes resumed their sad expression. She sighed deeply, and with the utmost caution replaced her hands on the conjugal bolster. Then, as though it were the first time in her married life that she was free to act or think, she looked at everything about her, stretching her neck with eager movements, like those of a bird in a cage. To see her, it was easy to discern how full of joy and frolic she once had been, and that fate had cut off her early hopes and transformed her ingenuous liveliness into melancholy.

The room was such as those which, even in our day, some octogenarian housekeepers exhibit to travellers who visit old baronial homes, with the statement, 'This is the state bedroom where Louis XIII once slept.' Fine tapestry of a generally brown tone was framed in deep borders of walnut wood, elegantly carved but blackened by time. The beams formed a coffered ceiling ornamented with arabesques of the previous century, and still showing the mottled grain of chestnut. These decorations, gloomy in their colouring, reflected so little light that it was difficult to make out the designs, even when the sun shone straight into the room, which was lofty, broad, and long. And a silver lamp standing on the shelf over the enormous fireplace gave so feeble a light that the quavering gleam might

be compared to the misty stars that twinkle for a moment through the grey haze of an autumn night.

The little monsters crouching in the marble carvings of this fireplace, which was opposite the countess's bed, made such grotesquely hideous faces that she dared not gaze at them. She was afraid of seeing them move, or of hearing a cackle of laughter from their gaping and distorted mouths.

At this moment a terrific storm was growling in the chimney, which echoed every gust, lending it doleful significance; and the vast opening communicated so freely with the sky that the brands on the hearth seemed to breathe, glowing and becoming dark by turns as the wind rose and fell. The escutcheon, with the arms of the Hérouvilles carved in white marble, with all its mantling and the figures of its supporters, gave a monumental effect to the erection which faced the bed, itself a monument to the honour and glory of Hymen.

A modern architect would have been greatly puzzled to decide whether the room had been made for the bed, or the bed for the room. Two Cupids sporting on a walnut-wood tester garlanded with flowers might have passed muster as angels; and the columns of the same wood which supported the canopy were carved with mythological allegories, of which the interpretation might be found either in the Bible or in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Remove the bed, and this baldachin would have been equally appropriate in a church over the pulpit or the officials' seats. The couple mounted to this sumptuous couch by three steps. It had a platform all round it, and was hung with two curtains of green watered silk, embroidered in a large and gaudy design of branches, the kind of pattern known as *ramages*, perhaps because the birds introduced were supposed to sing. The folds of these ample curtains were so rigid that at night the silken tissue might have been taken for metal. On the green velvet hanging with gold fringes,

at the head of this lordly couch, the superstition of the House of Hérouville had attached a large crucifix, over which the chaplain fixed a branch of box that had been blessed, when, on Palm Sunday, he renewed the holy water in the vessel at the foot of the Cross.

On one side of the fireplace stood a wardrobe of richly carved and costly wood, such as brides still had given them in the country on their wedding day. These old pieces of furniture, now so sought after by collectors, were the treasure-store whence ladies brought out their rich and elegant splendour. They contained lace, bodices, high ruffs, costly gowns, and the satchels, masks, gloves, and veils which were dear to the coquettes of the sixteenth century. On the other side, for symmetry, was a similar piece of furniture, in which the Countess kept her books, papers, and jewels. Antique chairs covered with damask, a large greenish mirror of Venetian manufacture and handsomely framed over a movable toilet table, completed the fittings of the room. The floor was covered by a Persian rug, and its price did honour to the Count's gallantry. On the uppermost broad step of the bed stood a small table, on which the waiting-woman placed every evening a cup of silver or of gold containing a draught prepared with spices.

When we have gone on a few steps in life we know the secret influence exerted over the moods of the mind by place and surroundings. Who is there that has not known bad moments when the things about him have seemed to give some mysterious promise of hope? Happy or miserable, man lends an expression to the most trifling objects that he lives with; he listens to them and consults them, so superstitious is he by nature.

The Countess at this moment let her eyes wander over all the furniture as if each thing had life. She seemed to be appealing to them for help or protection; but their gloomy magnificence struck her as inexorable.

Suddenly the storm increased in violence. The young wife dared hope for no favour as she listened to the threatening heavens, for such changes of weather were, in those credulous times, interpreted in accordance with the mood or the habits of individual minds. She hastily looked round at the two Gothic windows at the end of the room; but the small size of the panes and the close network of lead did not allow her to see the sky and make sure whether the end of the world was at hand, as certain monks declared, greedy of donations. And, indeed, she might well believe in their predictions, for the sound of the angry sea whose waves beat on the castle walls mingled with the war of the tempest, and the rocks seemed to quake.

Though the fits of pain were now more frequent and more severe, the Countess dared not rouse her husband; but she studied his features as if despair had warned her to seek in them some comfort against so many sinister prognostics.

Ominous as everything seemed around the young wife, that face, in spite of the tranquil influence of sleep, looked more ominous still. The glimmer of the lamp, flickering in the gusts, died away at the foot of the bed and only occasionally lighted up the Count's face, so that the dancing gleam gave the sleeping face the agitation of stormy thoughts. The Countess was hardly reassured when she had traced the cause of this effect. Each time that a blast of the gale flung the light across the large face, accentuating the shadows of the many rugosities that characterized it, she fancied that her husband would stare up at her with eyes of unendurable sternness. The Count's brow, as implacable as the war then going on between the Church and the Calvinists, was ominous even in sleep; many wrinkles, graven there by the agitations of a soldier's life, had given it a certain resemblance to the time-eaten heads that we see on monuments of that date; and hair, like the white mossy beards on old oaks, prematurely grey, framed the face un-

graciously, while religious intolerance stamped it with brutal passion.

The shape of the aquiline nose, resembling the beak of a bird of prey, the dark puckered ring round a tawny eye, the prominent bones of hollow cheeks, the deep, unbending lines of the face, and the contemptuous pout of the underlip, all revealed ambition and despotism and force, all the more to be dreaded because a narrow skull betrayed a total lack of wit, and courage devoid of generosity. This face was horribly disfigured, too, by a long scar across the right cheek, looking almost like a second mouth. The Count, at the age of two and twenty, eager to distinguish himself in the unhappy religious struggle for which the massacre of Saint Bartholomew's gave the signal, had been terribly wounded at the siege of La Rochelle. The disfigurement of this wound increased his hatred for the heretical party, and by a very natural instinct he included in his antipathy every man with a handsome face. Even before this disaster he had been so ill-favoured that no lady would accept his homage. The only passion of his youth had been for a famous beauty know as the Fair Roman. The susceptibility that came of this fresh disfigurement made him diffident to the point of believing it impossible that he could ever inspire a genuine passion, and his temper became so savage that if he ever had a successful love adventure he must have owed it to the terror inspired by his cruelty.

This terrible Catholic's left hand, which lay outside the bed, spread out so as to guard the Countess as a miser guards his treasure, completed the picture of the man; that enormous hand was covered with hair so long, it showed such a network of veins and such strongly marked muscles, that it looked like a branch of beech in the clasp of clinging, yellow ivy shoots. A child studying the Count's face would have recognised in him one of the ogres of which dreadful tales are told by old nurses.

Only to note the length and breadth of the place filled

by the Count was enough to show how huge a man he was. His bushy, grizzled eyebrows shaded his eyelids in such a way as to add to the light in his eyes, which sparkled with the ferocious glare of a wolf's at bay in the thicket. Below his leonine nose, a large unkempt moustache — for he scorned the cares of the toilet — hid his upper lip. Happily for the Countess, her husband's large mouth was at this moment speechless; for the softest accents of that hoarse voice made her shudder. Though the Comte d'Hérouville was hardly fifty years old, at first sight he might have passed for sixty, so strangely had the fatigues of war marred his face, though they had not injured his strong constitution; but he cared little enough to be taken for a popinjay.

The Countess, who was nearly eighteen, was indeed a contrast to his huge figure, pitiable to behold. She was fair and slender; her chestnut hair, with gleams of gold in it, fell on her neck like a russet cloud, and formed the setting for a delicate face such as Carlo Dolce loved for his ivory-pale Madonnas, who look as if they were sinking under the burthen of physical suffering. You might have deemed her an angel sent to mitigate the violent will of the Comte d'Hérouville.

'No, he will not kill us,' said she to herself, after gazing for some time at her husband. 'Is he not frank, noble, brave, and true to his word? True to his word!' As she thought over this a second time she shuddered violently and seemed stupefied.

To understand the horror of the Countess's immediate position, it is necessary to explain that this nocturnal scene took place in 1591; a period when civil war was raging in France, and the laws were ineffective. The excesses of the Ligue, averse to Henri IV's succession to the throne, surpassed all the calamities of the wars of religion. License had indeed reached such a pitch that no one was surprised to see a powerful lord effecting the murder of his enemy,

even in broad daylight. When a military manœuvre, undertaken for private ends, was conducted in the name of the King or of the Ligue, it was always cried up by one side or the other. It was thus, indeed, that Balagny, a common soldier, was within an ace of being a sovereign prince at the very gates of France.

As to murders committed in the family circle, if I may use such a phrase, 'no more were they heeded,' says a contemporary writer, 'than the cutting of a sheaf of straw,' unless they were marked by aggravated cruelty. Some time before the King's death, a lady of the Court assassinated a gentleman who had spoken of her in unseemly terms. One of Henri III's favourites had said to him: —

'And by the Lord, sir, she stabbed him handsomely.'

The Comte d'Hérouville, one of the most rabid royalists in Normandy, maintained obedience to the rule of Henri IV by the severity of his executions in all that part of the province that lay adjacent to Brittany. As head of one of the richest houses in France, he had added considerably to his income from broad lands by marrying, seven months before the night on which this tale opens, Jeanne de Saint-Savin, a young lady who, by a sort of luck that was common enough those days, when men died off like flies, had unexpectedly combined in her own person the wealth of both branches of the Saint-Savin family. Necessity and terror were the only witnesses to this union.

At a banquet given two months later, by the town of Bayeux to the Comte and Comtesse d'Hérouville in honour of their marriage, a discussion arose, which in those ignorant times was thought preposterous enough; it related to the legitimacy of children born ten months after a woman's widowhood or seven months after the wedding.

'Madame,' said the Count, turning brutally on his wife, 'as to your giving me a child ten months after my death, I cannot help myself. But I advise you not to begin with a seven-months' babe!'

'Why, what would you do, you old bear?' asked the young Marquis de Verneuil, fancying that the Count was in jest.

'I would wring both their necks at once, mother and child.'

So peremptory a reply closed the discussion imprudently opened by a gentleman of Lower Normandy. The guests sat silent, gazing at the pretty young Countess with a sort of terror. They were all fully persuaded that in such an event this ferocious noble would carry out his threat.

The Count's speech had sunk into the soul of the unhappy young wife, and at that instant one of those flashes of foresight that sear the victim like a lightning gleam in the future, warned her that her child would be born at seven months. An inward flame glowed through her from head to foot, concentrating all vitality about her heart so intensely, that she felt as if her body were in a bath of ice. And since then not a day had passed without this chill of secret terror coming to check the most innocent impulses of her soul. The memory of the Count's look and tone of voice as he spoke that sentence of death, could still freeze the Countess's blood and quell her pain while, leaning over that sleeping face, she tried to read in it some signs of the pity she vainly sought when it was waking.

The child, doomed to die before it was born, was struggling now, with increased energy, to come to the light of day, and she moaned, in a voice like a sigh: —

'Poor little one ——'

But she got no further; there are ideas which no mother can endure. Incapable of reason at such a moment, the Countess felt herself suffocating under an unknown anguish. Two tears overflowed and trickled down her cheeks, leaving two glistening streaks, and hanging from the lower part of her white face like dewdrops from a lily. Who would dare to assert that the infant lives in a neutral sphere which the mother's emotions cannot reach, during those times

when the soul enwraps the body and communicates its impressions, when thought stirs the blood, infusing healing balm or liquid poison. Did not the terror that rocked the tree injure the fruit? Were not the words, 'Poor little one!' a doom inspired by a vision of the future? The mother shuddered with vehement dread, and her foresight was piercing.

The Count's stinging retort was a link mysteriously binding his wife's past life to this premature childbirth. Those odious suspicions, so publicly proclaimed, had cast on the Countess's memories a light of terror which was reflected on the future. Ever since that disastrous banquet, she had been perpetually striving to chase away a thousand scattered images which she feared as much as any other woman would have delighted in recalling them, and which haunted her in spite of her efforts. She would not allow herself to look back on the happy days when her heart had been free to love. Like some native melody which brings tears to the exile, these reminiscences brought her such delightful feelings that her youthful conscience regarded them as so many crimes, and used them to make the Count's threat seem all the more dreadful; this was the secret horror that tortured the Countess.

Sleeping faces have a certain mildness that is due to the perfect repose of body and brain; but though this truce made little alteration in the hard expression of the Count's features, illusion displays such an attractive mirage to the unhappy, that the girl wife at last took some hope from this apparent peace. The storm, now spending itself in torrents of rain, was audible only as a melancholy moan; fear and pain both gave her a brief respite. As she gazed on the man to whom fate had linked her, the Countess allowed herself to indulge in a day-dream of such intoxicating sweetness that she had not the strength of mind to break the spell.

In a moment, by one of those visions which seem to

have some touch of divine power, she saw in a flash the picture of happiness now lost beyond recall.

First, as in a distant dawn of day, Jeanne saw the unpretending home where she had spent her careless childhood, —the green grass-plot, the purling stream, and the little room, the scene of her baby-games. She saw herself plucking flowers, to plant them again, wondering why they always faded without growing, in spite of constant watering. Presently, but at first in dim confusion, the huge town appeared, and the great house blackened by time, whither her mother had taken her at the age of seven. Her mocking memory showed her the elderly faces of the masters who had teased her; and, amid a flood of Italian and Spanish words, repeating songs in her brain to the music of a pretty rebec, she saw her father's figure. She went out to meet the President on his return from the court of justice, she saw him dismount from his mule, by the step, took his hand to mount the stairs, while her prattle chased the anxieties he could not always put off with his black or red gown, trimmed with the black and white fur which in sheer mischief she had clipped with her scissors.

She merely glanced at her aunt's confessor, the Prior of the Convent of Poor Clares, a stern and fanatical priest who was to initiate her into the mysteries of religion. Hardened by the intolerance induced by heresy, this old man was perpetually rattling the chains of Hell; he would talk of nothing but the vengeance of Heaven, and terrified her by impressing on her that she was perpetually in the sight of God. Thus intimidated she dared not lift her eyes, and thenceforth felt nothing but respect for her mother whom she had till then made the partner of all her fun. Religious awe took possession of her youthful soul whenever she saw that well-beloved mother's blue eyes turned on her with an angry look.

Then suddenly she was in her later childhood, while as yet she understood nothing of life. She half laughed at

herself as she looked back on the days when her whole joy was to sit at work with her mother in the small tapestried room, to pray in a vast church, to sing a ballad accompanying herself on the rebec, to read a tale of knight-errantry in secret, to pull a flower to pieces out of curiosity, to find out what present her father had in store for the high festival of St. John, — her patron saint, — and to guess at the meaning of speeches left unfinished in her presence. And then with a thought she wiped out these childish joys as we efface a word written in pencil in an album, dismissing the scenes her imagination had seized upon from among those the first sixteen years of her life could offer, to beguile a moment when she was free from pain.

The charm of that limpid ocean was then eclipsed by the glories of a more recent though less tranquil memory. The glad peace of her childhood was far less sweet than any one of the agitations that had come into the last two years of her life, — years rich in delights forever buried in her heart. The Countess suddenly found herself in the middle of an enchanting morning when, quite at the end of the large carved oak room that was used as a dining-room, she saw her handsome cousin for the first time. Her mother's family, alarmed by the riots in Paris, had sent this young courtier to Rouen, hoping that he would learn his duties as a magistrate under the eye of his grand-uncle whose post he might one day hope to fill. The Countess involuntarily smiled as she recalled the swiftness with which she had made her escape as she caught sight of this unknown relative. In spite of her quickness in opening and shutting the door, that one glance had left so strong an impression on her mind of the whole scene, that at this moment she seemed to see him exactly as he had looked when he turned round. She had then merely stolen an admiring peep at the taste and magnificence of his Paris-made dress; but now, bolder in her reminiscences, her eye more deliberately studied his cloak of violet velvet embroid-

ered with gold and lined with satin, the spurs that ornamented his boots, the pretty lozenge-shaped slashings of his doublet and trunk hose, and the falling ruff of handsome lace that showed a neck as white as itself. She stroked a face adorned with a small moustache parted and curled up at each end, and with a *royale* of beard like one of the ermine tails in her father's robe.

In the silence and the darkness, her eyes fixed on the silk curtains which she had ceased to see, forgetful of the storm and of her husband, the Countess dared to remember how, after many days which seemed like years so full were they, the garden shut in by old dark walls, and her father's gloomy house seemed to her luminous and golden. She loved and was loved! How, in fear of her mother's stern eye, she had stolen one morning into her father's study to tell her maiden secret, after perching herself on his knees and playing such pretty tricks as had brought a smile to those eloquent lips, — a smile for which she waited before she said: 'And will you be very angry with me if I tell you something?' He had asked her many questions, and she for the first time told her love; and she could hear him now saying: 'Well, my child, we will see. If he works hard, if he means to take my place, if you still like him, I will enter into the plot.' She had listened no more; she had hugged her father and upset everything, as she flew off to the great lime-tree where every morning, before her formidable mother was up, she kept tryst with the fascinating Georges de Chaverny. The young courtier promised to devour Law and Custom, and he abandoned the splendid adornments of the nobility of the sword to assume the severe dress of a magistrate.

'I like you so much better in black!' she had told him.

It was not true, but the fib had mitigated the lover's vexation at having to throw away his weapons.

The memory of her wiles to cheat her mother, who had seemed sternly severe, revived the joys of her innocent

love, authorised and reciprocated: some meeting under the limes where they could move freely and alone; some furtive embraces, stolen kisses, — all the artless first-fruits of a passion never overstepping the limits of modesty. Living through those rapturous days once more, as in a dream she dared to kiss, in empty space, the young face with glowing eyes, the rosy lips that had spoken so perfectly of love.

She had loved Chaverny, poor in riches; but what treasures had she not discovered in a soul as gentle as it was strong?

Then, suddenly, her father had died; Chaverny was not appointed to his place; civil war broke out in flames. By her cousin's help she and her mother had found a secret asylum in a small town of Lower Normandy.

And presently the successive deaths of various relations had left her one of the richest heiresses in France. But with comparative poverty all joy had fled. The ferocious and terrible face of the Comte d'Hérouville, a suitor for her hand, rose up like a thunder-cloud spreading a pall over the gladness of the earth, till now bathed in golden sunshine.

The hapless Countess tried to shake off her memories of the scenes of tears and despair brought about by her persistent refusal. Vaguely she saw the burning of the little town, Chaverny as a Huguenot cast into prison, threatened with death, awaiting a hideous martyrdom. And then came the dreadful night when her mother, pale and dying, fell at her feet. Jeanne could save her cousin — she yielded. It was night; the Count, blood-stained from the fight, was at hand; a priest seemed to spring from the earth, torches, a church; Jeanne was doomed to misery.

Hardly could she say good-bye to the handsome cousin she had rescued.

'Chaverny, if you love me, never see me more!'

She heard her noble lover's retreating steps, and never saw him again. But she cherished his last look in the

depths of her heart, the look she so often saw in her dreams bringing light into them.

Like a cat shut up in a lion's cage the young wife was in perpetual dread of her master's claws, ever raised to strike her. The Countess felt it as crime when, on certain days signalised by some unexpected pleasure, she put on the dress that the girl had worn the first time she had seen her lover. If she meant to be happy now it could only be by forgetting the past and thinking only of the future.

'I do not feel that I am guilty,' said she to herself; 'but if I am guilty in the Count's eyes, is it not the same thing? And perhaps I am. Did not the Holy Virgin conceive without — ?'

She checked herself.

At this instant, when her ideas were so hazy and her spirit was wandering in the world of fancies, her guilelessness made her ascribe to her lover's last look, projecting his very life, the power exerted over the mother of the Saviour by the angel's visit. But this idea, worthy of the age of innocence to which her dreams had carried her back, vanished at the recollection of a conjugal scene more horrible than death. The poor Countess had no doubts as to the legitimacy of the child that was causing her such anguish. The first night of her married life rose before her in all the horror of martyrdom, followed by many worse, and by more cruel days.

'Ah, poor Chaverny!' cried she with tears, 'you who were so gentle, so gracious — you always were good to me!'

She looked round at her husband, as to persuade herself yet that his face promised her the mercy she had paid for so dearly.

The Count was awake. His tawny eyes, as bright as a tiger's, gleamed under his bushy eyebrows, and their gaze had never been more piercing than at this moment. The

Countess, terrified by their glare, shrank under the counterpane and lay perfectly still.

'What are these tears for?' asked the Count, sharply, pulling aside the sheet under which his wife was hidden. This voice, which always terrified her, was at this moment tempered to a semblance of kindness which she deemed of good augury.

'I am in great pain,' said she.

'Well, sweetheart, and is it a crime to be in pain? Why do you tremble when I look at you? Alas, what must I do to be loved?'

All the wrinkles in his face seemed to gather between his eyebrows.

'I am always a terror to you, I can see it!' he added with a sigh.

Prompted by the instinct of feeble creatures, the Countess interrupted her husband with moans of pain, and then exclaimed: 'I fear I may be suffering from a miscarriage. I was walking on the rocks all the afternoon and have perhaps overtired myself—'

As he heard this speech, the Sire d'Hérouville gave his wife a glance so full of suspicion that she turned red and shuddered. He mistook the artless girl's fear of him for the pangs of remorse.

'Perhaps it is the beginning of timely labour?' he asked.

'And, if so?' said she.

'If so, and in any case, we must have the help of a skilled leech, and I will go to find one.'

The gloomy air with which he spoke froze the Countess: she sank back in the bed with a sigh wrung from her more by a warning of her doom than by the pangs of the imminent crisis. This groan only convinced the Count of the probability of the suspicions aroused in his mind. While affecting a composure to which his tone of voice, his way of moving, and his looks gave the lie, he hastily got up, wrapped himself in his bed-gown that lay in an arm-

chair, and began by locking a door near the fireplace, leading to the state rooms and the grand staircase. On seeing her husband pocket the key a forecast of misfortune oppressed the young wife; she heard him open a door opposite to that he had locked, and go into the room where the d'Hérouvilles slept when they did not honour their wives with their noble company. The Countess knew nothing of this but from hearsay; jealousy kept her husband always at her side. If military service required his absence from the state bed, the Count left more than one Argus at the castle, whose constant watchfulness proved his odious doubts.

In spite of the effort made by the Countess to catch the slightest sound, she heard no more. The Count had made his way into a long corridor adjoining his room, occupying the western wing of the building. His uncle, Cardinal d'Hérouville, an enthusiastic amateur of printed books, had collected there a library of some interest alike from the number and the beauty of the volumes, and prudence had led him to adopt in the walls one of the inventions due to monastic solitude or timidity. A silver chain attached to concealed wires acted on a bell hanging by the bed of a faithful retainer. The Count pulled the chain, a squire of his guard ere long approached, his boots and spurs clanging on the echoing steps of a newel stair in the high turret that flanked the western angle of the castle on the side towards the sea.

As he heard the man come up, the Count went to stir the rust on the iron springs and bolts which closed the secret door from the tower into the gallery, admitting to this sanctuary of learning a man-at-arms whose stalwart build showed him to be worthy of his master. This retainer, only half awake, seemed to have made his way by instinct; the horn lantern he carried threw so dim a light down the long room that his master and he were visible in the gloom like a couple of ghosts.

'Saddle my charger this minute! — and you must come with me.'

The order was given with an emphatic ring that startled the man into comprehension; he looked up at the Count, and met so piercing a look that it was like an electric shock.

'Bertrand,' the Count added, laying his right hand on his squire's arm, 'take off your armour and put on the uniform of a captain of the Spanish guard.'

''S death, Monseigneur! What, disguise myself as an adherent of the Ligue? Pardon me, I will obey; but I would as lief be hanged.'

The Count, flattered on his weak side, smiled; but to cover this expression, so strongly in contrast with that which characterised his features, he went on roughly: —

'Take a horse out of the stable strong enough to enable you to keep up with me. We must fly like bullets shot out of an arquebuse. Be ready by the time I am. I will ring.'

Bertrand bowed in silence and departed; but when he had gone down a few steps, he said to himself as he heard the howling gale: —

'All the devils are loose, by the Mass! I should have been astonished if this one had remained quiet. It was on just such a night that we took Saint-Lô.'

The Count returned to his room and found the dress which often did him service in carrying out a stratagem. After putting on a shabby doublet that looked as if it belonged to one of the poor troopers who were so rarely paid by Henri IV, he returned to the room where his wife lay moaning.

'Try to suffer in patience,' he said. 'I will kill my horse if necessary to come back the quicker and ease your pain.'

There was nothing sinister in this speech, and the

Countess, taking heart, was on the point of asking a question, when the Count suddenly went on: —

'Can you tell me where your masks are kept?'

'My masks?' replied she. 'Good God! What do you want with them?'

'Where are they?' he repeated, with his usual violence.

'In the cabinet,' said she.

The Countess could not help shuddering when she saw her husband select from among her things a half-mask, which the ladies of that time were as much accustomed to use as ladies of the present day are to wearing gloves. When the Count had put on a shabby grey felt hat with a broken cock's feather, he was quite unrecognisable. He buckled a broad leather belt about his middle, and stuck through it a dagger which he did not usually carry.

These squalid garments gave him so terrible an aspect, and he approached the bed with so strange a look, that the Countess thought her last hour had come.

'Oh, do not kill us!' she cried. 'Leave me my child and I will love you well.'

'You must feel guilty, indeed, to offer me as a ransom for your sins, the love you lawfully owe me.'

The Count's voice sounded lugubrious through the velvet, and these bitter words were emphasised by a look as heavy as lead, crushing the Countess as it fell on her.

'Dear God!' she cried sadly. 'Then is innocence fatal?'

'It is not your death that is in question,' replied her lord, rousing himself from the brown study into which he had sunk; 'but you are required to do exactly, and for love of me, what at this moment I demand of you.'

He tossed one of the masks on the bed, and smiled contemptuously as he saw the start of involuntary terror that the light touch of the black velvet caused his wife.

'You will give me but a puny babe!' said he. 'When I return, let me find you with this mask over your face. I

will not suffer any base-born churl to be able to boast of having seen the Comtesse d'Hérouville.'

'Why fetch a man to perform this office?' she asked, in a low voice.

'Hey-day, my lady, am not I the master here?' replied the Count.

'What matters a mystery more or less?' said the Countess in despair.

Her lord had disappeared, so the exclamation was not a danger to her; though the oppressor's measures are as far-reaching as the terrors are of his victim. In one of the brief pauses that divided the more violent outbursts of the storm, the Countess heard the tramp of two horses that seemed to be flying across the dangerous sand hills and rocks, above which the old castle was perched. This sound was soon drowned under the thunder of the waves.

She presently found herself a prisoner in this dismal room, alone in the dead of a night by turns ominously calm or threatening, and with no one to help her avert a disaster which was coming on her with rapid strides. The Countess tried to think of some plan for saving this infant conceived in tears, and already her only comfort, the mainspring of her thoughts, the future hope of her affections, her sole and frail hope. Emboldened by a mother's fears, she went to take the little horn which her husband used for summoning his people, opened a window, and made the brass utter its shrill blast which was lost across the waste of waters, like a bubble blown into the air by a child.

She saw how useless was this call unheeded by man, and walked through the rooms hoping that she might not find every escape closed. Having reached the library she sought, but in vain, for some secret exit; she felt all along the wall of books, opened the window nearest to the fore court of the château, and again roused the echoes with the horn, struggling in vain with the uproar of the storm. In her despair she resolved to trust one of her women, though

they were all her husband's creatures; but on going into the little oratory she saw that the door leading from this suite of rooms was locked.

This was a terrible discovery. Such elaborate precautions taken to isolate her, implied a purpose of proceeding to some terrible deed.

As the Countess lost all hope, her sufferings became more severe, and more racking. The horror of a possible murder, added to the exhaustion of labour, robbed her of her remaining strength. She was like a shipwrecked wretch who is done for at last by a wave less violent than many he has buffeted through.

The agonising bewilderment of pain now made her lose all count of time. At the moment when she believed that the child would be born, and she alone and unholpen, when to her other terrors was added the fear of such disaster as her inexperience exposed her to, the Count unexpectedly arrived without her having heard him come. The man appeared like a fiend at the expiration of a compact, claiming the soul that he had bargained for; he growled in a deep voice as he saw his wife's face uncovered, but he adjusted the mask not too clumsily and, taking her up in his arms, laid her on the bed in her room.

The dread of this apparition and of being thus lifted up made her forget pain for a moment; she could give a furtive glance at the actors in the mysterious scene, and did not recognise Bertrand who was masked like his master. After hastily lighting some candles, of which the glimmer mingled with the first sunbeams that peered in through the panes, the man went to stand in the corner of a window-bay. There, with his face to the wall, he seemed to be measuring its thickness; and he stood so absolutely still that he might have been taken for a statue.

The Countess then saw standing in the middle of the room a fat little man, quite out of breath, with a bandage over his eyes, and features so distorted by fear that it

was impossible to guess what their habitual expression might be.

'By the Rood, master leech,' said the Count, restoring the stranger to the use of his eyes by twitching the bandage roughly down on to his neck, 'beware of looking at anything but the miserable creature on whom you are to exercise your skill; or, if you do, I fling you into the river that flows beneath these windows, with a diamond necklace on that will weigh a hundred pounds and more!' And he gave a slight twist to the handkerchief that had served to bandage his bewildered hearer's eyes.

'First see if this is a miscarriage; in that case you answer for her life with your own. If the child is born alive bring it to me.'

Having made this speech, the Count seized the unhappy leech by the middle, lifted him up like a feather, and set him down by the side of the Countess. He then went also to the window, where he stood drumming on the glass with his fingers, looking by turns at his man-at-arms, at the bed, and at the sea, as if promising the expected infant that the waves should be its cradle.

The man whom the Count and Bertrand had with brutal inhumanity snatched from the sweetest slumbers that ever closed mortal eyes, to tie him on to the crupper of a horse which, he might have fancied, had all hell at its heels, was a personage whose physiognomy was characteristic of the period, and whose influence was to be felt on the House of Hérouville.

At no period were the noble classes less informed as to natural science, and never was astrology in greater request than at this time, for never was there a more general desire to read the future. This common ignorance and curiosity had led to the greatest confusion in human acquirements; everything was empirical and personal, for as yet theory had achieved no nomenclature; printing was extremely costly

and scientific communication was slow. The Church still persecuted the sciences of investigation based on the analysis of natural phenomena; and persecution engendered secrecy. Hence to the people as to the nobility, physicist, alchemist, mathematician and astronomer, astrologer and necromancer, — all were embodied in the leech or medical practitioner. At that time the most scientific leech was suspected of magic; while curing the sick he was expected to cast horoscopes.

Princes patronised the geniuses to whom the future was revealed; they afforded them shelter and paid them pensions. The famous Cornelius Agrippa, who came to France as physician to Henri II, refused to foretell events as Nostradamus did, and Catherine De'Medici dismissed him in favour of Cosimo Ruggieri. Thus those men who were in advance of their age and really worked at science were rarely appreciated; they all inspired the terror that was felt for occult studies and their results.

Without being quite one of those famous mathematicians, the man snatched up by the Count enjoyed in Normandy the equivocal reputation of a leech who undertook mysterious dealings. This man was the sort of wizard who is to this day known to the peasants in various parts of France as a bone-setter (*un rebouteur*). The name is given to men of uncultured genius, who, without any professional study but hereditary tradition, and often by the long practice of which observation is accumulated in a family, can set bones; that is to say, remedy fractured and dislocated limbs, besides curing certain maladies in man and beast, and possessing secrets reputed magical for the treatment of more serious diseases.

Maître Antoine Beauvouloir — this was the bone-setter's name — had not only inherited important lore from his grandfather and father, both famous practitioners, but he was also learned in medicine, and studied natural science. The country folks saw his room full of books and of strange things, which gave his success a tinge of magic. Without

regarding him quite as a sorcerer, the people for thirty leagues about treated Antoine Beauvouloir with a respect verging on terror; and, which was far more dangerous for him, he was in possession of secrets of life and death concerning all the noble families of the province.

Like his grandfather and his father, he was famous for his skill in attending childbirths, abortions, and miscarriage.

Now in these troubled times, lapses were common enough and passion violent enough to require the highest nobility sometimes to initiate Maître Beauvouloir into shameful or terrible secrets. His discretion, which was necessary to his safety, was above suspicion, and his patients paid him generously, so that the fortune he had inherited augmented conspicuously.

Always on the road, — sometimes taken by surprise, as we have just seen, sometimes obliged to spend several days in attendance on some great lady, — he was still unmarried; besides, his ill-name had hindered some damsels from marrying him. Not so base as to find consolations in the chances of a profession which gave him so much power over feminine weakness, the hapless bone-setter felt himself fitted for such family joys as he might not allow himself. The good man hid a warm heart under the deceptive surface of a cheerful temper that matched his chubby face, his rotund person, the nimbleness of his fat little body, and the bluntness of his speech.

He wished to marry, to have a daughter who might confer his wealth on some man of family; for he did not love his calling as a bone-setter, and longed to raise his family from the discredit it was held in by the prejudices of the time.

However, he derived no small satisfaction from the rejoicing and feasting which commonly succeeded his principal achievements. The habit of finding himself the most important person present on such occasions had weighted his liveliness with a certain grave conceit. His ill-timed

jests even were generally well taken in critical moments when he affected a certain masterly deliberateness. Then he was as inquisitive as a pick-lock, as greedy as a greyhound, and as gossiping as a diplomatist who can talk without ever betraying a secret. Barring these faults, developed by the various adventures into which he was brought by his profession, Antoine Beauvouloir passed for being the best soul in Normandy. Although he was one of the few men superior to the spirit of the age, the sound sense of a Normandy countryman had warned him to keep his acquired ideas and discovered truths to himself.

Finding himself by the bed of a woman in labour, the worthy bone-setter recovered his presence of mind. He proceeded to feel the masked lady's pulse, without thinking about her, however; but, under cover of this medical pretence, he could, and did, reflect on his own position. Never, in any of the disgraceful and criminal intrigues where he had been compelled by force to act as a blind instrument, had precautions been taken with so much care as in the present instance. Although his death had often been a matter of deliberation, as a way of securing the success of enterprises in which he had found himself engaged in spite of himself, his life had never seemed more uncertain than at this moment. Before anything he was determined to find out whom he was serving, and thus ascertain the extent of his danger, so as to be able to save his precious skin.

'What is the trouble?' he asked the Countess in an undertone, while arranging her so as to be able to give her the benefit of his experience.

'Do not suffer him to have the child.'

'Speak out!' cried the Count in a voice of thunder, which hindered the leech from hearing the victim's last word. 'Or else,' added the husband, disguising his voice, 'say your *In manus*.'

'Cry aloud,' said Beauvouloir to the lady. 'Cry out, by

the Mass! This man's jewels will suit your neck no better than mine. Courage, little lady.'

'Go gently!' cried the Count.

'My lord is jealous,' muttered the operator in a low, sharp tone that was happily drowned in the Countess's cries.

Happily for Maître Beauvouloir nature was lenient. It was more like abortion than childbirth, so tiny was the infant that presently appeared, and the mother's sufferings were not severe.

'By the Blessed Virgin,' exclaimed the bone-setter, 'this is no miscarriage!'

The Count stamped the floor till the boards quaked, and the Countess pinched the leech.

'Aha! Now I understand,' thought he. 'Then it ought to have been a miscarriage?' he asked in a whisper, and the Countess answered by an affirmative nod as if she dared not in any other way express herself. 'All this is not very clear,' thought the good man.

Like all men skilled in this branch of the medical art, Beauvouloir at once perceived that he had to deal with a woman in her first trouble, as he phrased it to himself. Though the modest inexperience of her movements plainly showed the Countess's innocence, the leech, meaning to be smart, exclaimed: —

'The lady is as clever at it as if she had never done anything else!'

The Count then said with a coldness that was even more terrible than his fury: —

'Give me the child!'

'Do not give it him for God's sake!' said the mother, whose almost savage cry roused a generous courage in the little man, attaching him much more than he would have thought possible to this child of noble birth whom its father had cast off.

'The child is not born yet; you are clamouring for

nothing,' he said coldly to the Count, covering up the unhappy infant.

Surprised to hear no cry the leech examined the child, believing it to be dead; the Count discovered the deception and sprang on him with a single bound.

"By God and all His saints!' the count yelled, 'will you give it to me?' and he snatched up the innocent victim which feebly wailed.

'Take care! It is deformed and scarcely alive,' said Maître Beauvouloir clutching the Count's arm. 'A seven-months' child, no doubt.'

And with a superior strength given him by his passionate excitement, he held the father's hand, whispering, gasping into his ear: —

'Spare yourself the crime; it will not live —'

'Wretch!' said the Count in a fury, as the bone-setter rescued the babe from his hold, 'who says I wish the child to die? Do you not see that I am caressing it?'

'Wait till he is eighteen years old before you caress him in that fashion,' replied Beauvouloir, reasserting himself. 'But,' he added, thinking of his own safety, for he had now recognised the Comte d'Hérouville, who in his rage had forgotten to disguise his voice, 'have him baptized at once and say nothing of my opinion to the mother, or you will kill her.'

The heartfelt joy betrayed by the Count's shrug when he was told that the infant must die, had suggested this speech to the old leech and had saved the child's life. Beauvouloir carried it back forthwith to the mother who had fainted away, and he pointed to her with an ironical gesture to frighten the Count by the state to which their discussion had reduced her. The Countess, indeed, had heard all, for it is a not uncommon thing for the senses to develop extreme sensitiveness in such critical situations. The cries of her infant lying by her side now brought her back to consciousness as if by magic, and she could have

believed that she heard the voice of angels when, under cover of the infant's wailing, the leech said in her ear: —

'Take great care of him and he will live to be a hundred. Beauvouloir knows what he is saying.'

A heavenly sigh, a covert pressure of the old man's hand were his reward, and before placing the tiny creature in its impatient mother's arms, he carefully examined to see whether the father's 'caress,' of which the print still remained on its skin, had done no injury to its frail frame.

The almost insane gesture with which the mother hid her babe, and the threatening look she flashed at the Count through the eye-holes of her mask made Beauvouloir shudder.

'She will die if she loses her child too suddenly,' he said to the Count.

During the latter part of this scene the Comte d'Hérouville seemed to have seen and heard nothing. Motionless, absorbed as it seemed in deep meditation, he was again drumming with his fingers on the window-panes. But at these last words of the leech's he turned upon him with an impulse of frenzied rage, and drew his dagger.

'Contemptible lout!' cried he (*manant*, a nickname used by the Royalists to insult the Leaguers), 'impudent rascal! Science, which has earned you the honour of becoming the helpmate of gentlemen when they are fain to prolong or cut short a hereditary race, hardly avails to hinder me from freeing Normandy of a wizard.'

Still, to Beauvouloir's great relief, the Count violently thrust the dagger home into its sheath.

'Are you incapable of finding yourself for once in the noble presence of a lord and his lady, without suspecting them of those base calculations which you allow among the common herd, forgetting that they, unlike the gently born, have no plausible motive for them? Am I likely to have state reasons for the action you choose to attribute to me? Kill my son! Take him from his mother! What

put such nonsense into your head? Am I a madman?— Why alarm us as to the life of such a strong infant? Villain! I would have you know that I distrusted your braggart vanity. If you could have known the name of the lady you have brought to bed, you would have boasted of having seen her! Pasques Dieu! And you might by excess of precaution have killed perhaps the mother or the child. But remember now, your life shall answer for your discretion and for their doing well!'

The leech was dismayed by this sudden change in the Count's views. This extraordinary fit of affection for the deformed infant frightened him more than the fractious cruelty and gloomy indifference of the Count's previous demeanour. In fact, his tone, as he spoke the last words, betrayed a more elaborate plot to achieve a purpose which was certainly unchanged.

Maître Beauvouloir accounted for this unforeseen revulsion by the promises he had made to the father and the mother.

'I have it!' thought he. 'The noble gentleman does not wish to make his wife hate him; he will trust to Providence in the person of an apothecary. I must try to warn the lady that she may watch over her noble babe.'

He was approaching the bed when the Count, who had gone to a closet, stopped him by an imperative word. On seeing the Count hold out a purse to him, Beauvouloir hastened, not without an uneasy satisfaction, to pick up the red net purse, full of gleaming gold, which was scornfully thrown to him.

'Though you ascribed to me the ideas of a villain I do not think myself exonerated from paying you as a lord should. I say nothing about secrecy. This man,' and he pointed to Bertrand, 'has no doubt made it plain to you that wherever oak-trees or rivers are to be found, my diamonds and my necklaces are ready for such caitiffs as dare speak of me.'

And with these magnanimous words the colossus went slowly up to the speechless leech, noisily drew forward a chair and seemed to bid him be seated, like himself, by the lady's bedside.

'Well, honey,' said he, 'at last we have a son. It is great joy for us. Are you suffering?'

'No,' murmured the Countess.

The mother's astonishment and timidity, and the tardy expressions of the father's spurious satisfaction, all convinced Maître Beauvouloir that some important factor here escaped his usual acumen. His suspicions were not allayed and he laid his hand on the lady's, less to feel her pulse than to give her a warning.

'The skin is moist,' said he. 'There is no fear of any untoward symptoms. There will be a little milk-fever, no doubt; but do not be alarmed; it will be nothing.'

The wily leech paused, and pressed the Countess's hand to attract her attention.

'If you wish to have no fears for your child, Madame,' said he, 'keep it always under your own eye. Let it feed for a long time on the milk its little lips are already seeking. Nurse it yourself, and never give it any apothecaries' drugs. The breast is the cure for all infantile complaints. I have seen many a birth at seven months, but never one accompanied by less pain. It is not surprising, the child is so thin. I could put it in a shoe! I do not believe it weighs fifteen ounces. Milk, milk! If he is always lying on your breast you will save him.'

These words were emphasised by another pressure of her fingers. In spite of two shafts of flame shot by the Count through the eye-holes of his mask, the good man spoke with the imperturbable gravity of a leech determined to earn his fee.

'How now, bone-setter, you are leaving your old black hat behind you!' said Bertrand, as he escorted the apothecary out of the room.

The motive of the Count's clemency towards his son was based on a legal *et cetera*. At the moment when Beauvouloir rescued him from his clutches, avarice and the usage of Normandy rose before his mind. Each, by a sign as it were, numbed his fingers and silenced his vengeful passions. One suggested to him, 'Your wife's property will not come to the family of Hérouville unless through an heir male.' The other pictured the Countess as dead and her estates claimed by a collateral branch of the Saint-Savins. Both counselled him to leave the removal of the changeling to the act of nature and await the birth of a second born, strong and healthy, when he might snap his fingers at his wife's chances of living and at his first-born.

He did not see the child, he saw an estate, and suddenly his affection was as large as his ambition. In his anxiety to comply with the requirements of custom, he only wished that this half-dead babe should acquire the appearance of strength.

The mother, who knew the Count's temper, was even more astonished than the leech; she still had some instinctive fears, which she sometimes boldly expressed, for the courage of a mother had in an instant given her strength.

For some days the Count was assiduous in his care of his wife, showing her such attentions as interest dictated, giving them even a show of tenderness. The Countess was quick to perceive that they were for her alone. The father's hatred of his child was visible in the smallest details; he would never look at it or touch it; he would start up suddenly and go away to give orders the instant it was heard to cry; in short, he seemed to forgive it for living only in the hope of its dying.

Even this much of self-restraint was too great an effort for the Count. On the day when he discovered that the mother's keen eye saw, without understanding, the danger

that threatened her child, he announced that, on the morrow of the Countess's thanksgiving service, he would leave home, on the pretext of leading his men-at-arms to the assistance of the King.

Such were the circumstances which preceded and surrounded the birth of Étienne d'Hérouville. Even if the Count had not had, as an all-sufficient reason for constantly desiring the death of this disowned son, the fact that he had wished it from the first, even if he would have smothered the odious human instinct of persecuting the victim who has already suffered, and if he had not been under the intolerable necessity of feigning affection for a hapless changeling of whom he believed Chaverny to be the father, poor little Étienne would none the less have been the object of his aversion. The misfortune of his rickety and sickly constitution, aggravated, perhaps, by the paternal caress, was a standing offence to his pride as a father.

Though he execrated handsome men, he no less detested weakly men in whom intelligence supplied the place of strength of body. To please him a man must be ugly, tall, stalwart, and ignorant. Étienne, whose delicate frame compelled him in some sort to devote himself to sedentary studies, was certain to find in his father a relentless foe. His struggle with the giant had begun in his cradle, and his only ally against so formidable an antagonist was his mother's heart; a love which, by a touching law of nature, was increased by the dangers that threatened it.

Left in sudden and utter solitude by her husband's abrupt departure, Jeanne de Saint-Savin owed the only semblance of happiness that could cheer her life, to her infant. This child, for whose existence she had suffered on the score of Chaverny, was as dear to her as if he had indeed been the offspring of illicit passion; she nursed him herself and felt no weariness. She would never accept

any help from her women; she dressed and undressed the child, taking a fresh pleasure in every little care. This incessant occupation and hourly attention, the punctuality with which she would wake in the night to suckle the child, were unbounded happiness. Joy lighted up her face as she attended to the little creature's needs.

As Étienne's birth had been premature, many little garments were lacking; these she would make herself, and she did it with such perfection as you mistrusted mothers may imagine, who have stitched in gloom and silence for your adored little ones. Each needleful of thread brought with it a memory, a hope, a wish, a thousand thoughts sewn into the stuff with the dainty patterns she embroidered. All these extravagances were repeated to the Comte d'Hérouville and added to the gathering storm. The hours of the day were too few for the myriad interests and elaborate precautions of the devoted mother; they flew, filled with secret happiness.

The leech's warnings were ever present to the Countess. She dreaded everything for the child, the services of the women and the touch of the men-servants; gladly would she never have slept, to be sure that nobody came near Étienne while she was slumbering; he slept by her side. In short suspicion kept watch over his cradle.

During the Count's absence she even dared to send for the leech, whose name she had not forgotten. Beauvouloir was to her a man to whom she owed an immense debt of gratitude; but above all she wanted to question him as to a thousand matters concerning her son. If Étienne was to be poisoned how should she forefend any such attempt? How should she strengthen his feeble constitution? When should she fitly wean him? If she should die, would Beauvouloir undertake to watch over the poor little one's health?

In reply to the Countess's enquiries Beauvouloir, truly touched, replied that he too feared some scheme to poison Étienne. On this point Madame la Comtesse had nothing

to fear so long as she nursed him; and afterwards he advised her always to taste the child's food.

'If, Madame la Comtesse, you should at any time notice any flavour that strikes you as strange, pungent, bitter, strong, briny — anything that startles your taste, reject the food. Let all the child's clothes be washed in your presence, and keep the key of the closet where they lie. And if anything should happen send for me; I will come.'

The old bone-setter's advice was stamped on Jeanne's heart, and she begged him to depend on her as one who would do all in her power to serve him. Beauvouloir then confided to her that she had his happiness in her hands.

He briefly told the Countess how that the Comte d'Hérouville, for lack of fair and noble dames to regard him with favour at Court, had in his youth loved a courtesan known as La Belle Romaine, who had previously been mistress to the Cardinal de Lorraine. This woman, whom he had soon deserted, had followed him to Rouen to beseech him in favour of a daughter to whom he would have nothing to say, making her beauty an excuse for refusing to acknowledge her. At the death of this woman in extreme poverty, the poor girl, whose name was Gertrude, and who was even handsomer than her mother, was taken under the protection of a convent of Poor Clares, whose Mother Superior was Mademoiselle de Saint-Savin, the Countess's aunt.

Beauvouloir, having been sent for to attend Gertrude, had fallen madly in love with her.

'If you, Madame la Comtesse,' he said in conclusion, 'would interfere in this matter, it would not only amply repay anything you may say that you owe me, but make me eternally your debtor.'

It would also justify him in coming to the château, which was not without danger in the Count's presence, and sooner or later the Count would no doubt take an interest in such

a beautiful girl, and might some day perhaps promote her interests by making him his physician.

The Countess, soft-hearted to all true lovers, promised to help the poor leech. And she did so warmly espouse his cause, that on the occasion of the birth of her second child, when, as was then the custom, she was authorised in asking a favour of her husband, she obtained a marriage portion for Gertrude, and the fair bastard, instead of taking the veil, married Beauvouloir. This little fortune and the bone-setter's savings enabled him to purchase Forcalier, a pretty little place adjoining the lands of Hérouville which was sold by its owners.

Thus, comforted by the worthy leech, the Countess felt her life well filled by joys unknown to other women. Every woman indeed is lovely when she presses her babe to her breast to still its cries and soothe its little pains; but even in an Italian picture it would be hard to find a more touching sight than the young Countess as she saw Étienne thriving on her milk, and her own blood, as it were, infusing life into the little creature whose life hung on a thread.

Her face beamed with love as she looked at the adored infant, dreading lest she should indeed discern in him a feature resembling Chaverny, of whom she had too often thought. These reflections, mingling on her brow with the expression of her joy, the brooding eye with which she watched her son, her longing to infuse into him the vitality she felt at her heart, her high hopes, the prettiness of her movements, all composed a picture that won the women about her; the Countess triumphed over spies.

Very soon these two weak creatures were united by common ideas, and understood each other before language could help them to explain themselves. When Étienne began to use his eyes with the wondering eagerness of an infant, they fell on the gloomy panels of the state bedroom. When his youthful ears first appreciated sound, and discerned their difference, he heard the monotonous

dash of the sea as the waves broke against the rocks with a repetition as regular as the pendulum of a clock. Thus place and sound and scenery, all that can strike the senses, prepare the intellect, and form the character, predisposed him to melancholy.

Was not his mother fated to live and die amid clouds of sadness? From the day of his birth he might easily have supposed that she was the only being existing upon earth, have regarded the whole world as a desert, and have been used to the feeling of self-reliance which leads us to live in solitude, and seek for happiness in ourselves by developing the resources of our own mind. Was not the Countess condemned to pass her life alone, and find her all in her boy, who, like her lover, was a victim to persecution?

Like all children who suffer much, Étienne almost always showed the passive temper which was so sweetly like his mother's. The delicacy of his nerves was so great that a sudden sound or the presence of a restless and noisy person gave him a sort of fever. You might have fancied him one of those frail insects for which God seems to temper the wind and the heat of the sun; incapable, as they are, of fighting against the least obstacle he, like them, simply yielded, unresisting and uncomplaining, to everything that opposed him. This angelic patience filled the Countess with a deep emotion which overruled all the fatigue of the constant attentions his frail health demanded of her.

She could thank God who had placed Étienne in an atmosphere of peace and silence, the only surroundings in which he could grow up happy. His mother's hands, so strong and to him so gentle, would often lift him high up to look out of the pointed windows. From them his eyes, as blue as his mother's, seemed to be taking in the grandeur of the ocean. The pair would sit for hours contemplating the infinite expanse of waters, by turns gloomy or bright, silent or full of sound.

These long meditations were to Étienne an apprenticeship to grief. Almost always his mother's eyes would fill with tears, and during these sad day-dreams Étienne's little face would look like a fine net puckered by too heavy a load. Before long his precocious apprehension of sorrow taught him how much his little play could affect the Countess, and he would try to divert her by such caresses as she bestowed on him to soothe his pain. And his little elfin hands, his babbled words, never failed to dissipate her sadness. If he was weary, his instinctive care for her kept him from complaining.

'Poor, sensitive darling!' cried the Countess, seeing him drop asleep from fatigue after a game which had driven away one of her fits of brooding. 'Where are you to live? Who will ever understand you — you, whose tender soul will be wounded by a stern look? You who, like your unhappy mother, will value a kindly smile as something more precious than all else this world can bestow? Angel, your mother loves you! But who will love you in the world? Who will ever suspect the jewel hidden in that frail frame? No one. Like me, you will be alone on earth. God preserve you from ever knowing, as I have done, a love approved by God but thwarted by man.'

She sighed and she wept. The easy attitude of her child, as he slept on her knees, brought a melancholy smile to her lips. She gazed at him for long, enjoying one of those raptures which are a secret between a mother and God.

Finding how greatly her voice, with the accompaniment of a mandolin, could charm her boy, she would sing the pretty ballads of the time, and could fancy she saw on his lips, smeared with milk, the smile with which Georges de Chaverny had been wont to thank her when she laid down her rebec. She blamed herself for thus recalling the past, but she returned to it again and again. And the child, an unconscious accomplice, would smile at the very airs that Chaverny had loved.

When he was eighteen months old the child's delicate health had never yet allowed of his being taken out of the house, but the faint pink that tinged the pallid hue of his cheek, as if the palest petal of a wild rose had been wafted there by the wind, promised life and health. Just as she was beginning to believe in the leech's prognostics, and was rejoicing in having been able, during the Count's absence, to surround her son with the strictest care so as to hedge him in from all danger, letters, written by her husband's secretary, announced his early return.

One morning when the Countess, given up to the wild delight of a mother when she sees her first-born attempt his first steps, was playing with Étienne at games as indescribable as are the joys of memory, she suddenly heard the floor creak under a heavy foot. She had scarcely started to her feet with an involuntary impulse of surprise than she found herself face to face with the Count. She gave a cry; but she tried to remedy this rash error by advancing to meet him, her brow submissively raised for a kiss.

'Why did you not give me warning of your coming?' said she.

'The reception,' interrupted the Count, 'would have been more cordial, but less genuine.'

Then he caught sight of the child. Its frail appearance at first provoked him to a gesture of astonishment and fury; but he controlled his rage and put on a smile.

'I have brought you good news,' he went on. 'I am made governor of Champagne, and the King promises to create me a duke and a peer of the realm. Besides, we have come into a fortune; that damned Huguenot de Chaverny is dead.'

The Countess turned pale, and sank into a chair. She could guess the secret of the sinister glee expressed in her husband's face, and the sight of Étienne seemed to aggravate it.

'Monsieur,' said she in a broken voice, 'you are well

aware that I had long been attached to my cousin de Chaverny. You will account to God for the pain you are inflicting on me.'

At these words the Count's eyes flashed fire; his lips trembled so that he could not speak, so mad was he with rage; he flung his dagger on to the table with such violence that the metal rattled like a thunder-clap.

'Listen to me,' said he in his deep voice, 'and mark what I say. I will never see nor hear the little monster you have in your arms, for he is your child and none of mine. Has he the least resemblance to me? By God and all his saints! Hide him, I tell you, or else ——'

'Merciful Heaven!' cried the Countess, 'preserve us.'

'Silence,' said the big man. 'If you do not want me to touch him, never let him come across my path.'

'Well, then,' said the Countess, finding courage to withstand her tyrant, 'swear to me that you will not try to kill him if you never see him anywhere. Can I trust to your honour as a gentleman?'

'What is the meaning of this?' exclaimed the Count.

'Well, kill us both, then,' cried she, falling on her knees and clasping the child in her arms.

'Rise, Madame; I pledge you my word as a gentleman to do nothing against the life of that misbegotten abortion, so long as he lives on the rocks that fringe the sea below the castle. I will give him the fisherman's house for a residence and the strand for his domain. But woe to him if I ever find him outside those limits.'

The Countess burst into bitter weeping.

'But look at him!' said she. 'He is your son.'

'Madame!'

At this word the terrified mother carried away the child, whose heart was beating like that of a linnet taken from its nest by a country lad.

Whether innocence has a charm which even the most hardened men cannot resist, or whether the Count blamed

himself for his violence and feared to crush a woman who was equally necessary for his pleasure and plans, by the time his wife returned his voice was softened as far as lay in his power.

'Jeanne, my sweetheart,' said he, 'bear me no ill-feeling, give me your hand. It is impossible to know how to take you women. I bring you honours and wealth, pardie! and you receive me like a miscreant falling among caitiffs. My government will necessitate long absences until I can exchange it for that of Normandy; so at least give me cordial looks so long as I sojourn here.'

The Countess understood the purport of these words and their affected sweetness could not delude her.

'I know my duty,' said she, with a tone of melancholy which her husband took for tenderness.

The timid creature was too pure-minded, too lofty, to attempt, as some cleverer woman would have done, to govern the Count by carefully regulated conduct, a sort of prostitution which to a noble soul seems despicable. She went slowly away to comfort her despair by walking with Étienne.

'By God and his saints! Shall I never be loved?' exclaimed the Count, discerning a tear in his wife's eye as she left him.

Motherly feeling, under these constant threats of danger, acquired in Jeanne a strength of passion such as women throw into a guilty attachment. By a sort of magic, of which every mother's heart has the secret, and which was especially real between the Countess and her boy, she was able to make him understand the peril in which he lived, and taught him to dread his father's presence. The miserable scene he had witnessed remained stamped on his memory and produced a sort of malady. At last he could forecast the Count's appearance with such certainty, that if one of those smiles, of which the dim promise is visible to a mother's eyes, had lighted up his features at the moment when his half-developed senses, sharpened by fear,

became aware of his father's tread at some distance, his face would pucker; and the mother's ear was not so quick as her infant's instinct. As he grew older, this faculty, created by dread, increased so much that, like the red savages of America, Étienne could distinguish his father's step and hear his voice at a great distance, and announce his approach. This sympathy, in her terror of her husband, at such an early age, made the child doubly dear to the Countess; and they were so closely united that, like two flowers growing on one stem, they bent to the same gale and revived under the same hopes. They lived but one life.

When the Count departed Jeanne was expecting another child, that was born with much suffering at the period demanded by prejudice: a fine boy, which in a few months' time was so exactly like his father that the Count's aversion for the elder was still further increased.

To save her darling the Countess consented to every plan devised by her husband to promote the happiness and fortunes of their second son. Étienne, promised a cardinal's hat, was driven to the priesthood that Maximilien might inherit the estates and titles of Hérouville. At this cost the poor mother secured peace for the disowned son.

When were two brothers more unlike than Étienne and Maximilien? The younger from his birth loved noise, violent exercise, and warfare; and the Count loved him as passionately as his wife loved Étienne. By a natural though tacit understanding each of them took chief care of the favourite.

The Duke — for by this time Henri IV had rewarded the great services of the Lord of Hérouville — the Duke not wishing, as he said, to overtax his wife, chose for Maximilien's wet-nurse a sturdy peasant-wife of Beauvais, found by Beauvouloir.

To Jeanne's great joy, he distrusted the mother's influ-

ence as much as her nursing, and determined to bring up his boy after his own mind. Maximilien imbibed a holy horror of books and letters; he learnt from his father the mechanical arts of military life, to ride on horseback from the earliest age, to fire a gun, and use a dagger. As he grew up the Duke took the boy out hunting that he might acquire the brutal freedom of speech, rough manners, physical strength, and manly look and tone which in his opinion made the accomplished gentleman. At twelve years old the young nobleman was a very ill-licked lion's cub, at least as much to be feared as his father, by whose permission he might and did tyrannise over all who came near him.

Étienne lived in the house on the sea-shore given to him by his father, and arranged by the Duchess in such a way as to provide him with some of the comforts and pleasures to which he had a right. His mother spent the greater part of the day there. She and her boy wandered together over rocks and beaches; she showed Étienne the delimitation of his little estate of sand, shells, seaweed, and pebbles, and her vehement alarm if he ever crossed the border line of the conceded territory, made him fully understand that death lay outside it. Étienne knew fear for his mother before he trembled for himself; and then while still young he felt a panic at the mere name of the Duc d'Hérouville, which bereft him of all energy, and filled him with the helpless alarm of a girl who falls on her knees to beseech a sign. If he but saw the ominous giant in the distance, or only heard his voice, the dreadful impression that remained to him of the time when his father had cursed him froze his blood. And like a Laplander who pines to death when removed from his native snows, he made a happy home of his hut and the rocks; if he crossed the boundary he was uneasy.

The Duchess, perceiving that the poor child could find happiness nowhere but in a restricted and silent sphere, regretted less the doom imposed upon him; she took ad-

vantage of his compulsory vocation to prepare him for a noble life by occupying his loneliness in the pursuit of learning, and she sent for Pierre de Sebonde to dwell at the castle as preceptor to the future Cardinal d'Hérouville. Notwithstanding his being destined to the tonsure, Jeanne de Saint-Savin would not have his education to be exclusively priestly; by her active interference it was largely secular. Beauvouloir was desired to instruct Étienne in the mysteries of natural science; and the Duchess, who superintended his studies to regulate them by the child's strength, amused him by teaching him Italian, and revealing to him the poetic beauties of the language.

While the Duke was leading Maximilien to attack the wild boar at the risk of being badly hurt, Jeanne was guiding Étienne through the Milky Way of Petrarca's sonnets, or the stupendous labyrinth of the *Divina Commedia*.

In compensation for many infirmities, nature had gifted Étienne with so sweet a voice that the pleasure of hearing it was almost irresistible; his mother taught him music. Songs, tender and melancholy, to the accompaniment of the mandolin, were a favourite recreation promised by his mother as the reward of some task set by the Abbé de Sebonde. Étienne would listen to his mother with such passionate admiration as she had never before seen but in the eyes of Chaverny.

The first time the poor soul thus revived her girlhood's memories, she covered her boy's face with frenzied kisses. She blushed when Étienne asked her why she seemed to love him so much more than usual, and then she replied that she loved him more and more every hour. Thus, ere long, she found in the care needed for his soul's discipline and his mental culture, the same joys as she had known in nursing and strengthening her boy's frame.

Though mothers do not always grow up with their sons, the Duchess was one of those who bring into their motherhood the humble devotion of love; she could be

both fond and critical. She made it her pride to help Étienne to become in every respect superior to herself, and not to govern him; perhaps she felt herself so strong in her unfathomable affection that she had no fear of seeming small. Only hearts devoid of tenderness crave to domineer; true feeling loves abnegation which is the virtue of the strong.

If Étienne did not at first understand some demonstration, some abstruse text, or theorem, the poor mother, who would sit by him at his lessons, seemed to long to infuse into him an apprehension of all knowledge, as of old at his faintest cry she had fed him from her breast. And then what a flush of joy crimsoned her cheeks when Étienne saw and took in the meaning of things! She proved, as Pierre de Sebonde said, that a mother lives a double life, and that her feelings include two existences.

The Duchess thus enhanced the natural feelings that bind a son to his mother by the added tenderness of a resuscitated passion. Étienne's delicate health led her to continue for some years the care she had devoted to his infancy. She would dress him and put him to bed; none but she ever combed and smoothed, curled and scented her boy's hair. This toilet was one long caress; she kissed the beloved head as often as she touched it lightly with the comb.

Just as a woman delights in being almost a mother to her lover, by rendering some homely service, so this mother in a way treated the child as a lover; she saw some faint likeness in him to the cousin she still loved beyond the tomb. Étienne was like the ghost of Georges seen in the remote heart of a magic mirror, and she would tell herself that there was more of the gentleman than of the priest in the boy.

'If only some woman as loving as I am, would infuse into him the life of love, he might yet be very happy,' she often reflected.

But the all-powerful interests which depended on Étienne's becoming a priest would come to her mind, and she would kiss and leave her tears on the hair which the shears of the Church would presently cut away.

In spite of the unjust conditions imposed by the Duke, in the perspective her eye could picture, piercing the thick darkness of the future, she never saw Étienne as a priest or a cardinal. His father's utter neglectfulness allowed her to preserve her poor boy as yet from taking orders.

'There will always be time enough!' she would say.

And without confessing the thought that lay buried in her heart, she trained Étienne in the fine manners of the Court; she would have him as tender and gentle as Georges de Chaverny. Reduced to a small allowance by the Duke's ambitions, for he himself managed the family estates, spending all his revenues in ostentation, or on his retainers, she had adopted the plainest attire for her own wear, spending nothing on herself, that she might give her son velvet cloaks, high boots trimmed with lace, and doublets of rich materials, handsomely slashed.

These personal privations gave her the delight of the secret sacrifices we hide from those we love. It was a joy to her, as she embroidered a ruff, to think of the day when she should see it on her boy's neck. She alone took charge of Étienne's clothes, linen, perfumes, and dress; and she dressed herself only for him, for she loved to be thought charming by him.

So much care, prompted by an ardour of affection which seemed to penetrate and vitalise her son's frame, had its reward. One day Beauvouloir, the good man who had made himself dear to this outcast heir by his teaching, and whose services were indeed known to the lad, the leech, whose anxious eye made the Duchess quake every time it rested on her fragile idol, pronounced that Étienne might enjoy a long life if no too violent emotions should overtax the delicate constitution.

Étienne was now sixteen.

At this age Étienne was not tall and he never became so; but Georges de Chaverny had been of middle height. His skin, as clear and fine as a little girl's, showed the delicate network of blue veins beneath. His pallor was of the texture of porcelain. His light blue eyes were full of ineffable sweetness and seemed to crave protection of man and woman alike; the ingratiating softness of a supplicant beamed in his look, and began the charm which the melody of his voice achieved.

Perfect modesty was stamped on every feature. Long chestnut hair, smooth and glossy, was parted over his brow and fell curling at the ends. But his cheeks were pale and worn, and his innocent brow, furrowed with the lines of congenital suffering, was sad to see; while his mouth, though pleasing and furnished with very white teeth, had the sort of fixed smile we see on the lips of the dying. His hands, as white as a woman's, were remarkably well-shaped.

Much thought had given him the habit of holding his head down, like an etiolated plant, and this stoop suited his general appearance; it was like the last touch of grace which a great artist gives to a portrait to enhance its meaning. You might have fancied that a girl's head had been placed on the frail body of a deformed man.

The studious and poetical moods, rich in meditation, in which, like botanists, we scour the fields of the mind, the fruitful comparison of various human ideas, the high thoughts that are born of a perfect apprehension of works of genius, had become the inexhaustible and placid joys of this lonely and dreamy existence.

Flowers, those exquisite creations whose fate so much resembled his own, were the objects of his love. The Duchess, happy in seeing that her son's innocent pastimes were such as would preserve him from the rough contact

of social life, which he could no more have endured than some pretty ocean fish could have survived the touch of the sun on the sands, had encouraged Étienne's tastes by giving him Spanish *romanceros*, Italian *motetti*, books, sonnets, and poetry. The Cardinal d'Hérouville's library had been handed over to Étienne; reading was to be the occupation of his life.

Every morning the boy found his wilderness bright with pretty flowers of lovely hues and sweet scent; thus his studies, which his delicate health would not allow him to continue for long at a time, and his play among the rocks, were relieved by endless meditations which would keep him sitting for hours as he looked at his innocent companions, the flowers, or crouching in the shade of a boulder, as he pondered on the mysteries of a seaweed, a moss, or a lichen. He would seek a poem in the cup of a fragrant flower as a bee might rifle it for honey.

Often, indeed, he would simply admire, without arguing over his enjoyment of the delicate tracery of a richly coloured petal, the subtle texture of these cups of gold or azure, green or purple, the exquisite and varied beauty of calyx and leaf, their smooth or velvety surface, that were rent — as his soul would be rent — with the slightest touch.

At a later time, a thinker as well as a poet, he discerned the reason of these infinite manifestations of nature that was still the same; for, day by day, he advanced in the interpretation of the sacred Word that is written in every form of creation. These persistent and secret studies carried on in the occult world gave his life the half-torpid appearance of meditative genius.

For long hours Étienne would bask on the sands, a poet unawares. And the sudden advent of a gilded insect, the reflection of the sunbeams from the sea, the twinkling play of the vast and liquid mirror of waters, a shell, a sea-spider — everything was an event and a delight to his guileless

soul. To see his mother coming, to hear the soft rustle of her gown, to watch for her, kiss her, speak to her, listen to her, all caused him such acute excitement that some little delay or the least alarm would throw him into a high fever.

All his life was in his soul; and to save the still frail and weakly body from being destroyed by the large emotions of that soul, Étienne needed silence and kindness, peace in the world about him, and a woman's love. For the present his mother could enwrap him in love and kindness; the rocks were silent; flowers and books beguiled his solitude; and finally his little realm of sand and shells, of grass and seaweed, were to him a world perennially bright and new.

Étienne got all the benefit of this absolutely innocuous physical existence and this poetically noble, moral atmosphere. A boy still in development, a man in mind, he was equally angelic from both points of view. By his mother's guidance, his studies had lifted his emotions to the sphere of intellect. Thus the activity of his mind worked itself out in the abstract world, far from the social life which, if it had not killed him, would have brought him suffering. He lived in the soul and in the mind. After apprehending human thought through reading, he rose to the great first principles that vitalise matter, he felt them in the air and read thoughts written in the sky. In short, he had at an early age climbed to the ethereal heights where he could find fit nourishment for his soul,— a nourishment rare but intoxicating, which inevitably predestined him to woe on the day when this accumulated treasure should clash with the other treasure which a sudden passion brings to the spirit.

Though Jeanne de Saint-Savin sometimes trembled at the thought of that storm, she would comfort herself by a thought suggested by her son's gloomy vocation; for the poor mother knew of no remedy for any evil but the

acceptance of a lesser one. Her very joys were full of bitterness.

'He will be a cardinal,' she would reflect, 'he will live for the arts and be their patron. He will love Art instead of loving a woman, and Art will never betray him.'

Thus the happiness of this devoted mother was constantly qualified by the painful thoughts to which Étienne's strange position in his family gave rise. The two brothers had grown up without knowing each other; they had never met; each knew not of his rival's existence. The Duchess had long hoped for some opportunity during her husband's absence when she might bring the two boys together and infuse her soul into them both. She flattered herself that she might engage Maximilien's interest in Étienne by explaining to the younger brother how much care and affection he owed to the elder, in return for the renunciation that had been imposed on him, and to which, though compulsory, Étienne would be faithful. But this hope, long fondly cherished, had vanished.

Far, now, from wishing to make the brothers acquainted, she dreaded a meeting between Étienne and Maximilien even more than between her boy and his father. Maximilien, who could believe in nothing good, would have feared lest Étienne should one day assert his forfeited rights, and would have thrown him into the sea with a stone tied to his neck.

Never had a son so little respect for his mother. As soon as he could reason at all he perceived how small was the Duke's regard for his wife. If the old Governor still preserved some form of politeness in his conduct to the Duchess, Maximilien, hardly ever restrained by his father, caused her a thousand griefs.

Old Bertrand, too, took care that Maximilien should never see Étienne, whose very existence was carefully concealed from him. All the dependents on the château cordially hated the Marquis de Saint-Sever, the name borne

by Maximilien; and all who knew of the existence of the elder son regarded him an instrument of vengeance held in reserve by God. Thus Étienne's future prospects were indeed doubtful; he might be persecuted by his brother.

The poor Duchess had no relations to whom she could confide the life and interests of this beloved son; and might not Étienne blame her, if, in the purple robe of Rome, he longed to be such a father as she had been a mother?

These thoughts, and her saddened life, full of unconfessed griefs, were like a long sickness mitigated by gentle treatment. Her spirit craved for skilful kindness, and those about her were cruelly unpractised in gentleness. What mother's heart but must ache continually as she saw her eldest born, a man of heart and intellect, with the promise of true genius, despoiled of all his rights, while the younger, a nature of coarse homespun, devoid even of military talent, was destined to wear the ducal coronet and perpetuate the race? The House of Hérouville was sacrificing its true glory. The gentle Jeanne, incapable of curses, could only bless and weep; but she often raised her eyes to Heaven to wonder at the reason for this strange doom. Her eyes would fill with tears as she reflected that, at her death, her son would in fact be an orphan and the object of a brother's brutality, who knew neither faith nor law.

So much suppressed feeling, her first love never forgotten, her many sorrows unrevealed, — for she concealed her worst griefs from her adored son, — her ever insecure joys and incessant anxieties, had told on her constitution, and sown the seeds of a decline which, far from amending, seemed aggravated day by day. At last a final blow developed consumption. The Duchess tried to point out to her husband the results of Maximilien's training, and was roughly repulsed; she could do nothing to counteract the evil seed that was germinating in her son's heart. She now fell into a state of such evident debility that her illness

required the promotion of Beauvouloir to the position of leech in the castle of Hérouville to the Governor of Normandy; so the old bone-setter took up his residence there.

In those days such places were given to the learned who thus found leisure to carry out their studies, and the maintenance needful to enable them to pursue them. Beauvouloir had for some time longed for this position, for his learning and his wealth had made him many and malignant enemies. Notwithstanding the protection of an illustrious family to whom he had done some service in a doubtful case, he had recently been dragged into a criminal trial; and only the intervention of the Governor, at the Duchess's entreaty, had saved him from prosecution. The Duke had no cause to repent of the public protection he afforded to the leech; Beauvouloir saved the Marquis de Saint-Sever from an illness so dangerous that any other doctor must have failed. But the Duchess's malady dated from too far back to be healed, especially when the wound was reopened daily in her own home. When it was evident that the end was approaching for this angel who had been prepared by so much suffering for a happier life eternal, death was hastened by her gloomy forecast of the future.

'What will become of my poor boy without me?' was the thought that constantly recurred like a bitter draught.

At last, when she was obliged to remain in bed, the Duchess faded rapidly to the tomb, for she was then parted from her boy who was exiled from her pillow by the agreement to which he owed his life. His grief was as great as his mother's. Inspired by the genius born of suppressed feeling, Étienne devised a highly mystical language by which to communicate with his mother. He studied the use of his voice as the most accomplished singer might have done, and came to sing in mournful accents under the Duchess's window whenever Beauvouloir signalled to him

that she was alone. Formerly, in his cradle, he had comforted his mother by his intelligent smiles; and now, a poet, he soothed her by the sweetest melody.

'Those strains give me life!' the Duchess would exclaim to Beauvouloir, breathing in the air that wafted the sounds of Étienne's voice.

At last the day came when the disowned son was plunged into enduring regrets. Many a time already had he discerned a mysterious connection between his feelings and the motions of the surges. The spirit of divination of the impulses of matter which he derived from his studies of the occult sciences, made this phenomenon more cogent to him than to many another. During this evening, when he was called to see his mother for the last time, the ocean was stirred by movements which seemed to him passing strange. There was a convulsion of the waters as though the depths of the sea were in travail; it swelled into mounting waves which died on the strand with dismal sounds like the yelping of dogs in torment.

Étienne even said to himself: 'What is it that the sea wants of me? It is tossing and complaining like a living thing. My mother has often told me that the ocean was fearfully convulsed on the night when I was born. What is going to befall me?'

This idea kept him standing at his cottage window, his eyes alternately fixed on the panes of the room where his mother lay and where a low light flickered, and on the waters which were still breaking.

Suddenly Beauvouloir knocked gently at the door, opened it, and showed a face dark with apprehension.

'Monseigneur,' said he, 'Madame la Duchesse is in such a sad state that she wishes to see you. Every precaution has been taken to forefend any evil that may await you in the castle; but we must be very prudent; and we shall be obliged to go through the Duke's room, the room you were born in.'

At these words Étienne's eyes filled with tears, and he exclaimed: —

'The ocean was warning me!'

He mechanically allowed himself to be conducted to the door of the turret, up which Bertrand had come on the night that saw the birth of the disinherited child. The man was waiting there, lantern in hand. Étienne went up to the Cardinal d'Hérouville's great library, where he was obliged to wait with Beauvouloir, while Bertrand went to open the doors and reconnoitre as to whether the lad could go through without danger.

The Duke did not wake. As they went forward with stealthy steps, Étienne and the leech could not hear a sound in all the castle but the feeble moans of the dying woman. Thus the same circumstances as had attended the boy's birth recurred at his mother's death: the same storm, the same anguish, the same dread of waking the ruthless giant who was now sleeping soundly. To forefend all risk, the henchman took Étienne up in his arms and carried him through the formidable master's room, prepared to make an excuse of the Duchess's dying state, if he should be detected.

Étienne was keenly alive to the fears confessed by these two faithful servants, but the agitation prepared him in some degree for the scene that met his eyes in this lordly room, where he now found himself for the first time since the day when his father's curse had banished him. On the huge bed, which happiness had never visited, he looked for the loved mother, and could hardly find her so cruelly was she emaciated. As white as the lace she wore, and with scarce a breath left, she collected her strength to take Étienne's hands, trying to give him her whole soul in one long look, as, long since, Chaverny had bequeathed to her his whole life in one farewell. Beauvouloir and Bertrand, the child and his mother, and the sleeping Duke were all once more together. It was the same place, the same scene, the same actors; but here was funereal woe instead

of the joys of motherhood, the night of death instead of the morning of life.

At this instant the hurricane, foretold by the loud rollers of the sea ever since sunset, broke loose.

'Dear flower of my life,' said Jeanne de Saint-Savin, kissing her son's forehead, 'you came into the world in the midst of a tempest, and in a tempest I am going out of it. Between those two hurricanes all has been storm, save in the hours when I have been with you. And now my last joy is one with my last sorrow. Farewell, sweet image of two souls at last to be united! Farewell, my only, my perfect joy, my best-beloved!'

'Ah, let me die with you!' said Étienne, who had lain down by his mother's side.

'It would be the happier fate,' said she as the tears stole down her pale cheeks, for, as of old, she read the future. 'No one saw him come?' she anxiously asked the two attendants.

At this moment the Duke turned in his bed. They all trembled.

'There is a taint on even my latest joy,' cried the Duchess. 'Take him away! take him away!'

'Mother, I would rather see you a few minutes longer and die for it,' said the poor boy as he fainted away.

At a sign from the Duchess, Bertrand took Étienne in his arms, and showing him once more to his mother, who embraced him with a last look, he stood ready to carry him away at a sign from the dying woman.

'Love him well,' she said to the squire and the leech, 'for he has no protectors that I can see, save you and God.'

Guided by the unerring instinct of a mother, she had discerned the deep pity felt by Bertrand for this eldest son of the powerful race for which he felt the sort of veneration that Jews devote to the Holy City. As to Beauvouloir, the compact between him and the Duchess was of ancient date.

The two true men, touched at seeing their mistress compelled to bequeath the noble youth to their care, promised by a solemn gesture to be the providence of their young lord, and the mother trusted them implicitly.

The Duchess died in the morning, a few hours later; she was mourned by her remaining servants, who pronounced her only funeral panegyric, saying that she was 'a gracious dame come down from Paradise.'

Étienne sank into the deepest, the most unbroken grief, — a silent grief. He no longer wandered on the shore; he had no heart to read or sing. He would sit the whole day half hidden in a rocky nook, indifferent to the severity of the weather, motionless, as if glued to the granite like one of the lichens that grew on it. He rarely wept, but was absorbed in a single thought, as deep, as infinite as the ocean; and, like the ocean, that thought would assume a thousand aspects, would be dreadful, tempestuous, or calm. This was something more than sorrow; it was a new life, an inevitable fate that had fallen on this noble being who would never smile again. There are griefs which, like blood dropped into running water, tinge the stream but for a time; the flow renews it and restores its purity. But with Étienne the spring was tainted; each wave of time brought the same embittered draught.

Bertrand, in his advancing years, had remained steward of the stables and stud, so as to retain a post of some authority in the household. His residence was not far from the cottage where Étienne lived in retirement, so he was enabled to watch over him with the unfailing constancy and wily simplicity of affection which are characteristic of old soldiers. To talk to this poor boy he set aside all his roughness; he would go gently in wet weather and rouse him from his sorrowful dreaming, to come home with him. He made it his pride to fill the Duchess's place, at any rate so far as that her son should be equally

well cared for, if not equally loved. This compassion was indeed akin to tenderness. Étienne accepted his retainer's devotions without complaint or resistance; but the ties between the outcast child and other human beings were too much broken for any ardent affection to find birth in his heart. He allowed himself to be protected, mechanically, as it were, for he had become a sort of hybrid creature between man and a plant, or perhaps between man and God. To what can a being be likened, to whom social law and the false sentiments of the world were unknown, who, while obeying the instincts of his heart, was yet absolutely innocent?

Still, in spite of his deep melancholy, he presently felt the need for loving. He wanted another mother, another soul one with his; but, cut off as he was from all civilisation by a wall of brass, it was unlikely that he should meet any other being so flowerlike as himself. By dint of seeking for a second self to whom he might confide his thoughts, whose life he might make his own, he fell into sympathy with the ocean. The sea became to him a living and thinking being. Being constantly familiar with that immense creation, whose occult wonders are so strangely unlike those of the land, he discovered the solution of many mysteries. Intimate from his infancy with the measureless waste of waters, sea and sky told him wondrous tales of poesy.

To him variety was ceaseless in that vast expanse, apparently so monotonous. Like all men in whom the soul overmasters the body, he had a keen eye, and could discern at immense distances and with the greatest ease, without fatigue, the most fugitive effects of light, the most transient play of the waves. Even in a perfect calm he found endless variety of hue in the sea, which, like a woman's countenance, had its expression, smiles, fancies, whims: here green and gloomy, there radiantly blue, its gleaming streaks merging in the doubtful brightness of

the horizon, or, again, swelling with soft pulses under golden clouds. He witnessed magnificent spectacles of glorious display at sunset, when the day-star shed its crimson glow over the waves like a mantle of splendour.

To him the sea at mid-day was cheerful, lively, sparkling, when its ripples reflected the sunshine from their myriad dazzling facets; and spoke to him of fathomless melancholy, making him weep, when in a mood of calm and sorrowful resignation, it repeated a cloud-laden sky. He had mastered the wordless speech of this stupendous creation. Its ebb and flow were like musical breathing; each sob expressed a feeling, he understood its deepest meaning. No mariner, no weather prophet, could foretell more exactly than he the least of Ocean's rages, the faintest change of its surface. By the way the surf died on the beach he could foresee a storm or a squall, and read the distant swell and the force of the tide.

When night spread a veil over the sky, he still saw the sea under the twilight and still could hold converse with it; he lived in its teeming life, he felt the tempest in his soul when it was wroth; he drank in its anger in the piping of the storm, and rushed with the huge breakers that dashed in dripping fringes over the boulders; he then felt himself as terrible and as valiant as the waves, gathering himself up as they did with a tremendous backward sweep; he too could be darkly silent, and imitate its sudden fits of forbearance. In short, he had wedded the sea, it was his confidant and his love. In the morning, when he came out on his rocks, as he wandered over the smooth, glistening sand, he could read the mood of the ocean at a glance; he saw its scenery, and seemed to hover over the broad face of the waters like an angel flown down from heaven. If it lay under shifting, elfin, white mists as delicate as the veil over a bride's brow, he would watch their swaying motion with lover-like delight, as much fascinated by finding the sea thus coquetting like a woman aroused but still half

asleep, as a husband can be to see his bride beautiful with happiness.

His mind, thus united to this great divine mind, comforted him in his loneliness, and the thousand fancies of his brain had peopled his strip of wilderness with sublime images. He had at last read in the motions of the sea all its close connection with the mechanism of the sky, and grasped the harmonious unity of nature, from the blade of grass to the shooting stars, which, like seeds driven by the wind, try to find a resting place in the ether.

Thus, as pure as an angel, untainted by the thoughts that debase men, and as guileless as a child, he lived like a seaweed, like a flower, expanding only with the treasures of a poetical imagination, of a divine knowledge which he alone gauged in its full extent. It was indeed a singular mixture of two orders of creation! Sometimes he was uplifted to God by prayer; and sometimes came down again, humble and resigned to the tranquil enjoyment of an animal. To him the stars were the flowers of the night, the sun was as a father, the birds were his comrades.

He saw his mother's soul in all things; he often saw her in the clouds; he spoke to her and held communion with her in celestial visions; on certain days he could hear her voice, see her smile; in fact there were times when he had not lost her. God seemed to have endowed him with the powers of the ancient recluses, to have given him exquisite internal senses which could pierce to the heart of things. Some amazing mental power enabled him to see further than other men into the secrets of the immortals. His grief and suffering were as bonds that linked him to the world of spirits, and he fared forth into it, aroused by his love, to seek his mother, thus by a sublime similarity of ecstasy repeating the enterprise of Orpheus. He would project himself into the future, or into the heavens, just as he would fly from his rock from one margin of the horizon to the other.

And often when he lay crouching in some deep cave, fantastically wrought in the granite cliff, with an entrance as small as a burrow, where a softened light prevailed as the warm sunbeams peered in through some cranny hung with dainty seaside mosses, a perfect sea-bird's nest, — often he would suddenly fall asleep. The sun, his master, would remind him of his slumbers by marking off the hours during which he had remained oblivious of the scene, — the sea, the golden sands, and the shelly shore. Then, under a light as glorious as that of heaven, he saw the mighty cities of which his books had told him; he wandered about gazing with surprise, but without envy, at courts and kings, battles, men, and buildings. These dreams in broad daylight, made him ever fonder of his gentle flowers, his clouds, his sun, his noble granite cliffs. An angel, as it seemed, to attach him more closely to his solitary life, revealed to him the gulfs of the world of sin, and the dreadful jars of civilised life. He felt that his soul would be rent in the wild ocean of mankind and perish, crushed like a pearl which, in the royal progress of a princess, falls from her coronet into the muddy street.

II

HOW THE SON DIED

In 1617, twenty years or more after the terrible night when Étienne was brought into the world, the Duc d'Hérouville, then seventy-six years old, broken and half dead, was sitting at sunset in a vast arm-chair by the pointed window of his bedroom, in the very spot where the Countess, by the bugle strain wasted in the air, had vainly called for help on man and God.

He might have been a man disinterred from the grave. His powerful face, bereft of its sinister look by age and suffering, was of a pallor almost matching the long locks of white hair that fell round his bald head with its parchment skull. Warlike fanaticism still gleamed in his tawny eyes, though tempered by a more religious feeling. Devotion had, indeed, lent a monastic cast to the countenance that had of yore been so stern, and it now wore a tinge which softened its expression. The glow of sunset shed a tender red light on the still vigorous features; and the broken frame wrapped in a brown gown, by its heavy attitude and the absence of any movement, gave the finishing touch to the picture of monotonous solitude and dreadful repose in a man formerly so full of life and hatred and activity.

'Enough!' said he to his chaplain.

The venerable old man was reading the Gospel, standing in a respectful attitude before his master. The Duke, like the old lions in a beast-garden who are majestic even in their decrepitude, turned to another grey-haired man, hold-

ing out a lean arm sprinkled with hairs and sinewy still, though no longer strong.

'Now it is your turn, bone-setter,' said he. 'See how we stand to-day.'

'All is well with you, Monseigneur; the fever is past. You will live many a long year yet.'

'I would I could see Maximilien here,' replied the Duke, with a smile of satisfaction. 'My fine boy! He is in command now of a company of arquebusiers under the King. The Maréchal d'Ancre has been good to the lad, and our gracious Queen Marie is trying to find a worthy match for him now that he has been created Duc de Nivron. So my name will be worthily perpetuated. The boy achieved wonders of valour at the assault ——'

At this moment Bertrand came in, holding a letter in his hand.

'What is this?' cried the old lord, hastily.

'A missive brought by a courier from the King,' replied the squire.

'The King, and not the Queen Mother?' cried the Duke. 'What then is happening? Are the Huguenots in arms again? By God and all his saints!' he added, drawing himself up and looking round at the three old men, 'I will have out my armed men again, and with Maximilien at my side, Normandy ——'

'Sit down again, dear my lord,' said the leech, uneasy at seeing the Duke give way to an outburst so dangerous to a sick man.

'Read it, Maître Corbineau,' said the Duke, giving the letter to the confessor.

The four figures made a picture full of lessons to the human race. The squire, the priest, and the leech, white with age, all three standing in front of their lord as he sat in his chair, and stealing timid looks at each other, were all possessed by one of those ideas which come upon a man within an inch of the grave. In the strong light of the

setting sun, they formed a group of the highest melancholy and strong in contrasts. And the gloomy, solemn room, where for five and twenty years nothing had been altered, was a fit setting for the romantic picture full of burnt-out passions, shadowed by death, full of religion.

'"The Maréchal d'Ancre has been executed on the pont du Louvre by the King's orders; and then ——" O God!'

'Go on,' said the Duke.

'Monseigneur le Duc de Nivron ——'

'Well?'

'Is dead!'

The Duke's head fell on his breast, he sighed deeply and spoke not. At this word and this sigh the three old men looked at each other. It was as though the noble and wealthy House of Hérouville were disappearing before their eyes like a foundering vessel.

'The Master above us,' the Duke added, with a fierce glance heavenwards, 'is but ungrateful to me. He forgets the gallant deeds I have done for his holy cause.'

'God is avenged,' said the priest, solemnly.

'Take this man to the dungeon!' exclaimed the master.

'You can silence me more easily than you can stifle your conscience.'

The Duc d'Hérouville was thinking.

'My house is extinct! My name will die!—I must have a son!' he exclaimed after a long pause.

Frightful as was his expression of despair, the leech could not forbear from smiling.

At that moment a song as clear as the evening air, as pure as the sky, as simple as the hue of ocean, rose above the murmur of the waves as if to charm nature. The sadness of the voice, the melody of the strain, fell like perfume on the spirit. The voice came up in gusts, filled the air, and shed balm on every sorrow, or rather soothed them by

giving them utterance. The song mingled so perfectly with the sound of the waves that it seemed to rise from the bosom of the waters.

To these old men it was sweeter than the tenderest vows of love could have been to a girl. It conveyed so much religious hope that it echoed in the heart like a voice coming from heaven.

'What is that?' asked the Duke.

'The nightingale singing,' replied Bertrand. 'All is not lost either for him or for us.'

'What is it that you call a nightingale?'

'It is the name we have given to your eldest son, Monseigneur,' replied Bertrand.

'My son!' cried the old Duke. 'Then I have still a son, something to bear my name and perpetuate it?'

He rose to his feet and began to pace the room, now slowly, now in haste; then by a commanding gesture he dismissed his attendants, retaining the priest.

On the following morning the Duke, leaning on his old squire, made his way along the strand and over the rocks to find the son he once had cursed; he saw him from afar, crouching in a cleft in the granite, basking idly in the sun, his head resting on a tuft of fine grass, his feet curled up in a graceful attitude; Étienne suggested a swallow that has alighted to rest.

As soon as the stately old man made his appearance on the shore, and the sound of his steps, deadened by the sand, was audible, mingling with the dash of the waves, Étienne looked round, and with the cry of a startled bird vanished into the rock itself, like a mouse that bolts so swiftly into its hole that we doubt whether it was there.

'Eh! By God and his saints! where has he hidden himself?' exclaimed the Duke, as he reached the projection under which his son had been crouching.

'In there,' said Bertrand, pointing to a narrow rift

where the stone was worn and polished by the friction of high tides.

'Étienne, my beloved son!' the old man cried.

But the disowned son made no reply.

During a great part of the morning, the old Duke besought and threatened, entreated and scolded by turns, but without obtaining an answer. Now and again he was silent, applying his ear to the opening, but all his old ears could hear was the deep throbbing of Étienne's heart, of which the wild beating was echoed by the cavern.

'He at any rate is alive!' said the old father in a heartrending tone.

By noon, in sheer despair, he was a suppliant.

'Étienne,' he said, 'my beloved Étienne, God has punished me for misprizing you! He has snatched your brother from me. You are now my one and only child. I love you better than myself. I recognize my errors: I know that it is my blood that flows in your veins with your mother's, and that her misery was of my making. Come to me; I will try to make you forget your wrongs by loving you for all I have lost. Étienne, you are Duc de Nivron, and after me you will be Duc d'Hérouville, Peer of France, Knight of the French orders and of the Golden Fleece, captain of a hundred men of the guard, Grand Bailli of Bessin, Governor and Vice-regent of Normandy, lord of twenty-seven estates including sixty-nine steeples, and Marquis de Saint-Sever. You may marry a prince's daughter. You will be the head of the House of Hérouville. Do you want to make me die of grief? Come to me, come or I stay here on my knees, in front of your hiding-place, till I see you. Your old father implores you, and humbles himself before his son as if he were praying to God himself!'

The disowned son did not understand this speech bristling with ideas and vanities of which he knew nothing, he only was aware of a revival in his mind of impressions of

invincible terror. He remained speechless in agonies of dread.

Towards evening the old man, having exhausted every resource of language, every form of adjuration, every expression of repentance, was seized by a sort of religious contrition. He knelt down on the sand and made a vow.

'I swear to build a chapel to Saint John and Saint Stephen, the patron saints of my wife and son, and to endow a hundred masses to the Virgin, if God and the saints will give me the love of Monsieur le Duc de Nivron, my son here present!'

There he remained on his knees, in deep humiliation, his hands clasped in prayer. But his child not yet coming forth to him, the hope of his race, tears poured from his long-dry eyes and rolled down his withered cheeks.

Just then Étienne, hearing all silent, crept out of the rift from his grotto like a snake longing for the sunshine; he saw the tears of the broken-hearted old man, recognised a genuine sorrow, took his father's hand and kissed it, saying in angelic accents: —

'O Mother, forgive!'

In the fever of gladness the Governor of Normandy took his frail heir in his arms, the lad trembling like a girl carried off by force; and feeling him quake he tried to reassure him, kissing him with as much gentleness as he might have used in handling a flower, and finding for him such sweet words as he had never been wont to speak.

''Fore God, but you are like my poor Jeanne! Dear child,' said he, 'tell me all you wish. I will give you your heart's desire. Be strong, be well! I will teach you to ride on a jennet as mild and gentle as yourself. No one shall contradict you. By God and all his saints! everything shall bend to you like reeds before the wind. I give you unlimited power here. I myself will obey you as the head of the family.'

The father led his son into the state bedroom where his

mother had ended her sad life. Étienne went at once to lean against the window where life had begun for him, whence his mother had been in the habit of signalling to him when the persecutor was absent, who now, he knew not wherefore, had become his slave, and seemed as one of those gigantic beings placed at the command of a young prince by a fairy. That fairy was the feudal feeling.

On seeing once more this gloomy room where his eyes had first learned to contemplate the ocean, tears rose to the youth's eyes; the memories of his long sorrows mingling with the dear remembrance of the joys he had known in the only affection that had ever been granted to him — his mother's love — all fell on his heart at once, and seemed to fill it with a poem that was both terrible and beautiful. The emotions of this lad, accustomed to dwell absorbed in ecstasy, as others are accustomed to give themselves up to worldly excitement, had no resemblance to the feelings of ordinary humanity.

'Will he live?' asked the old man, amazed at his son's fragility; he caught himself holding his breath as he bent over him.

'I can live nowhere but here,' replied Étienne, simply, having heard him.

'Then this room is yours, my child.'

'What is happening?' asked young d'Hérouville, as he heard all the dwellers in the castle precincts collecting in the guard-room, whither the Duke had summoned them to present his son to them, never doubting of the result.

'Come,' was his father's reply, taking him by the hand and leading him into the great hall.

At that period a duke and peer of such estate as the Duc d'Hérouville, having charges and governments, led the life of a sovereign prince; the younger members of the family were fain to serve under him; he had a household with its officers; the first lieutenant of his company of guards was to him what the aides-de-camp now are to a field marshal.

Only a few years later the Cardinal de Richelieu maintained a body-guard. Several of the princes who were allied to the royal family — the Guises, the Condés, the Nevers, the Vendômes — were attended by pages of the best families, a survival of the extinct chivalry. His vast fortune, and the antiquity of the Norman to which he belonged, as indicated by his name (*herus villa*, the chief's house), had enabled the Duc d'Hérouville to display no less magnificence than others who were his inferiors, such as the Épernons, the Luynes, the Balagnys, the d'Os, the Zamets, who as yet were but parvenus and nevertheless lived like princes.

The Duke seated himself on a chair, under a *solium* or carved wooden canopy, and raised on a few steps, a sort of throne whence in some provinces certain lords of the soil still pronounced sentence in their jurisdiction, a relic of feudal customs which finally ceased under Richelieu's rule. This sort of judge's bench, resembling the wardens' seats in a church, are now rare objects of curiosity.

When Étienne found himself seated here by his father's side, he shuddered at finding him the centre of all eyes.

'Do not tremble,' said the Duke, bending his bald head down to his son's ear, 'for all these are our own people.'

Through the gloom partly lighted by the setting sun, whose beams reddened the windows of the hall, Étienne could see the bailie, the captains and lieutenants at arms, followed by some of their men, the squires, the almoner, the secretaries, the leech, the house-steward, the ushers, the land-steward, the huntsmen and gamekeepers, the retainers, and the footmen. Although this crowd stood in a respectful attitude, caused by the terror the old Duke had inspired even in the most important personages who dwelt under his command and in his province, there was a dull murmur of wondering curiosity. This whisper weighed on Étienne's heart; this was the first time that he had experienced the effect of the heavy atmosphere breathed in a room full of

people, and his senses, accustomed to the pure and wholesome sea air, were nauseated with a suddenness that showed the delicacy of his organisation. A terrible palpitation, caused by some structural defect of the heart, shook him with its vehement throbs, when his father, determined to appear as a majestic old lion, spoke the following words in solemn tones: —

'My good friends, this is my son Étienne, my eldest born, my heir presumptive, the Duc de Nivron, on whom the King will doubtless devolve the offices of his brother now dead. I have brought him before you that you may acknowledge him and obey him as you would me. And I warn you that if any one among you, or any man in the province over which I rule, shall displease the young Duke or cross his will in anything, it were better for that man, if it should come to my ears, that he had never been born. You have heard. Go your ways to your business, and God be with you.

'Maximilien d'Hérouville will be buried here, as soon as his body has been brought hither. In eight days the whole household will go into mourning. Later we will do honour to the heir, my son Étienne.'

'Long live Monseigneur! Long live the Hérouville!' was shouted in voices that made the walls ring.

The footmen brought torches to light up the hall.

These acclamations, the glare of light, the emotions caused by his father's speech, added to what he already felt, made Étienne turn faint. He fell back on the seat, his girlish hand grasped in his father's broad palm.

As the Duke, who had signed to the lieutenant of his company to come closer, was saying: 'I am glad, Baron d'Artagnon, to be able to repair my loss; — come and speak to my son,' he felt an ice-cold hand in his own, looked round at the Duc de Nivron, and, thinking him dead, gave a cry of terror that startled all present.

Beauvouloir opened the barrier in front of the dais, took

the lad up in his arms, and carried him out, saying to his master: —

'You might have killed him by not preparing him for this ceremonial.'

'Will he not live to have a son, then?' cried the Duke, who had followed Beauvouloir into the state bedroom where the leech laid the young heir on the bed.

'Well, Maître?' asked the father, anxiously.

'It will be nothing,' replied the old man, pointing to Étienne, now reviving under the influence of a cordial administered on a lump of sugar, at that time a new and precious substance sold for its weight in gold.

'Here, you old rascal,' said the Duke, offering Beauvouloir his purse; 'care for him as for a king's son. If he should die in your hands I would cook you myself on a gridiron ——'

'If you persist in being so violent the Duc de Nivron will die by your act,' said the leech, bluntly. 'Leave him and he will sleep.'

'Good-night, my best beloved,' said the old man, kissing his son's forehead.

'Good-night, father,' replied the youth, and his voice gave the Duke a thrill as he heard him address him for the first time by the name of father.

The Duke took Beauvouloir by the arm and led him into the next room, where he cornered him in a window-bay, saying: —

'Now, old rascal, we will have it out.'

This speech, the Duke's favourite jest, made the leech smile; he had long since given up bone-setting.

'That I owe you no grudge you know full well. Twice you brought my poor wife through her troubles, you cured my son Maximilien of a sickness; in short, you are one of the family. — Poor boy! I will avenge him; I will answer for the man who killed him! — The whole future of the House of Hérouville is in your hands. Now we

must marry this boy without delay. You alone know whether there is in that poor changeling the stuff of which more Hérouvilles may be made. Do you hear me? What do you think?'

'The life he has led on the sea-shore has been so chaste and pure that nature is sturdier in him than it would have been if he had lived in your world. But so frail a body is always the slave of the soul. Monseigneur Étienne must select his own wife, for in him all will be the work of nature, not the outcome of your will. He will love guilelessly, and by the prompting of his own heart achieve what you want him to do for your name. Marry your son to a lady of rank who is like a mare and he will flee to hide in the rocks. Nay, more; if a sudden alarm would kill him to a certainty, I believe that sudden joy would be equally fatal. To avert disaster I am of opinion that Étienne must be left to find his own way, at his leisure, in the paths of love. Listen to me, Monseigneur: though you are a great and puissant prince, you know nothing about these matters. Grant me your entire and unlimited confidence and you shall have a grandson.'

'If I have a grandson, by whatever conjuring trick you please, I will get you a patent of nobility. Yes, hard as it may be, from an old rascal you shall be turned into a gentleman, you shall be Beauvouloir Baron de Forcalier. Work it by green or dry, by black magic or white, by masses in church or a meeting at a witches' Sabbath, so long I have a male descendant all will be well.'

'I know of a wizard's meeting that might spoil everything, and that, Monseigneur, is you yourself. I know you. To-day you wish for a male grandchild at any cost; to-morrow you will insist on arranging the conditions of the bargain; you will torment your son ——'

'God forbid!'

'Well then, set out for the Court where the Marshal's death and the King's emancipation must have turned every-

thing upside down, and where you must have some business to attend to, were it only to get the Marshal's baton which was promised to you. Leave Monseigneur Étienne to me. But pledge me your honour as a gentleman to approve whatever I do.'

The Duke grasped the old man's hand in token of entire confidence and retired to his room.

When the days of a high and puissant noble are in the balance, the leech is an important person in the household, so we need not be surprised at finding an old bone-setter on such familiar terms with the Duc d'Hérouville. Irrespective of the illegitimate relationship which tied him through marriage to this lordly house, and which told in his favour, the learned leech had so often shown his good sense to the Duke's advantage, that he was one of his favourite advisers. Beauvouloir was the Coyctier of this Louis IX.

Still, valuable as was his scientific knowledge, the physician had not so much influence as the old feudal traditions over the Governor of Normandy, still fired with the ferocious passions of religious war. And the faithful servant had understood that the prejudices of a noble would interfere with the father's hopes. Being, in truth, a very learned leech, Beauvouloir felt that for a being so delicately organised as Étienne, marriage ought to be gentle and gradual inspiration which might infuse fresh vigour into him by firing him with the glow of love. As he had said, to insist on any particular woman would be to kill the youth. Above all things to be avoided was frightening the young recluse by the idea of marriage, of which he knew nothing, or by letting him see the end his father had in view. This unconscious poet could know none but such a noble passion as Petrarch's for Laura, as Dante's for Beatrice. Like his mother he was all pure love, all soul; he must have the opportunity of loving placed in his way, and then

all must be left to the event. It would not do to command him; an order would seal the springs of life.

Master Antoine Beauvouloir had a child, a daughter, brought up in a way that made her the wife for Étienne. It had been so impossible to foresee the occurrences by which this youth, destined by his father to be a cardinal, had become heir presumptive to the dukedom of Hérouville, that Beauvouloir had never observed the similarity of circumstances in the lives of Étienne and Gabrielle. It was a sudden idea suggested rather by his affection for the two children than by any ambition.

In spite of his skill his wife had died in giving birth to this daughter, who was so delicate that he feared the mother had bequeathed to her child the germs of early death. Beauvouloir adored his Gabrielle as all old men adore an only child. His skill and ceaseless care lent the fragile creature an artificial life; for he cherished her as a gardener nurses an exotic plant. He had kept her from all eyes on his little estate of Forcalier, where she was sheltered from the troubles of the times by the universal good-will felt for a man to whom every one about him owed some debt of kindness, while his scientific power commanded a sort of awed respect. By attaching himself to the Hérouville household, he had increased the immunities he enjoyed in the province, and had balked the hostilities of his enemies by his important position as medical attendant to the Governor: but on coming to the castle he had taken care not to bring with him the flower he kept hidden at Forcalier,— an estate of more value from the lands it comprised than from the mansion that stood on it, and on which he founded his hopes of settling his daughter in a manner suited to his views for her.

When promising the Duke a grandson, and exacting his promise to approve of any measure, he suddenly thought of Gabrielle, the gentle girl whose mother had been as completely forgotten by the Duke as his son Étienne had

been. He waited till his master had left to put his plan into practice, being aware that, if it should come to the Duke's knowledge, the enormous difficulties which a favourable issue would nullify, would by anticipation prove insuperable.

Beauvouloir's house faced the south, standing on the slope of one of the pleasant hills that enclose the vales of Normandy; a thick wood sheltered it on the north; high walls and clipped hedges and deep ditches enclosed in impenetrable seclusion. The garden was laid out in terraces down to the river which watered the meadows at the bottom, where a high bank between shrubs made a natural dyke. These hedges screened a covered walk, winding with the windings of the stream, and as deeply buried as a forest path in willows, beeches, and oaks.

From the house to this embankment stretched the rich verdure native to the district, a slope shaded by a grove of foreign trees whose mingled hues made a richly varied background of colour: here the silvery tones of a pine stood out against the darker green of elms; there a slim poplar lifted its waving spire in front of a group of old oaks; further down weeping-willows drooped in pale tresses between burly walnut-trees. This copse now afforded shade at all times on the way down from the house to the river path.

In front of the house a terrace walk spread a yellow band of gravel, and it was shadowed by a wooden verandah overgrown with creepers, which, by the month of May, were covered with blossoms up to the first-floor windows.

The garden, though not extensive, was made to seem so by the way it was planned; and points of view, cleverly contrived from the knolls, overlooked the valley where the eye might wander at will. Thus, as instinctive fancy led her, Gabrielle could either retire into the solitude of a sheltered spot where nothing was to be seen but the close grass, and the blue sky between the tree-tops, or gaze far

into the distance, her eye following the shading of green hills from the vivid hue of the foreground to the pure depths of the horizon, where they faded into the blue ocean of air, or mingled with the mountain clouds that floated over them.

Tended by her grandmother, and served by her foster-mother, Gabrielle Beauvouloir never left her modest home but to go to the church of which the belfry crowned the hill, and whither she was always escorted by her grandmother, her nurse, and her father's man-servant. Thus she had grown up to the age of seventeen in the sweet ignorance which the scarcity of books made possible, without its seeming extraordinary in a time when a woman of learning was a rare phenomenon. Her home had been like a convent, with added liberty, and without compulsory prayer, where she had dwelt under the eye of a pious woman and the protection of her father, the only man of her acquaintance.

This utter solitude, required in her infancy by her fragile constitution, had been carefully maintained by Beauvouloir. As Gabrielle grew up, indeed, her frail youth was strengthened by the care that was lavished on her and the pure air she breathed. Still, the experienced leech could not fail to mark how the pearly hues about his daughter's eyes would alter, darken, or redden with every emotion; here frailty of body and activity of soul were indicated by signs which long experience enabled him to read; also Gabrielle's heavenly beauty gave him cause for dreading the deeds of violence that were only too common in those times of rebellion and warfare. Thus many reasons had concurred to induce the good man to thicken the shadows and insist on solitude for his daughter, whose sensitive nature was also a cause for alarm; a passion, an abduction, an attack of any kind, would be her death.

Though his child rarely needed reproof, a word of blame crushed her; she brooded over it, it sank into her heart and

gave rise to pondering melancholy; she would retire to weep, and weep for long. Thus her moral training had needed as much tender care as her physical training. The old leech dared not tell her the tales which commonly enchant children; they agitated her too deeply. So the father, who by long practice had learnt so many things, had been careful to develop his daughter's frame that the body might dull the shocks inflicted by so active a spirit. Gabrielle was his life, his love, his sole desire, and he never hesitated to procure everything that might contribute to the desired end. He kept her from books, pictures, music, every creation of art that could excite her brain. With his mother's help he interested Gabrielle in manual occupations. Tapestry, sewing, and lace-making, the care of flowers, the duties of a housewife, the fruit harvest, — in short, all the most homely tasks of life were the lovely child's daily fare. Beauvouloir bought her pretty spinning-wheels, handsomely inlaid chests, rich carpets, Bernard Palissy's pottery, tables, prie-dieus and chairs finely carved and covered with costly stuffs, embroidered linen, and jewels. With the subtle instinct of a father the old man always chose his gifts from such things as were decorated in the fanciful taste known as Arabesque, which, as it appeals neither to the emotions nor the senses, speaks only to the mind by its purely imaginative inventions.

And so, strangely enough, the life to which a father's hatred had condemned Étienne d'Hérouville, a father's love had provided for Gabrielle. In both the children the soul was like to destroy the body; and, but for the complete solitude that fate had contrived for one, and science had created for the other, both might have succumbed — he to fears, and she to the tide of a too ardent passion of love. But, unfortunately, Gabrielle was not born in a land of heath and moor, amid the sterner aspects of grudging nature, such as the greatest painters always depict as the back-

ground for their Virgins; she dwelt in a rich and fertile valley. Beauvouloir could not frustrate the charms of the natural groves, the happy arrangement of the flower-beds, the cool depth of the grassy carpet, the love revealed in the twining and climbing plants.

These living poems have a language of their own, felt rather than understood by Gabrielle, who would abandon herself to vague dreams under the leafy shade; and through the misty ideas which came to her in her admiration of a cloudless sky, her long study of a landscape, seen under every aspect lent it by the changing seasons and the variations of a sea-born atmosphere, where the fogs of England died away into the bright daylight of France, a distant light dawned on her mind, the aurora of a day that pierced the darkness in which her father kept her.

Nor had Beauvouloir been able to exclude Gabrielle from the influence of divine love; she added to her admiration of nature adoration of the Creator; she had indeed rushed into this first outlet afforded to womanly emotions; she truly loved God, she loved Jesus, the Virgin and the saints; she loved the Church and its splendour; she was a Catholic after the pattern of Saint Theresa who found in the Saviour an unfailing spouse, a perpetual marriage. But Gabrielle accepted this passion of lofty souls with a pathetic simplicity that might have disarmed the most brutal seducer by the innocence of its utterance.

Whither would this blameless ignorance lead her? How was enlightenment to be brought to an intelligence as pure as the calm waters of a lake that has never mirrored aught but the blue sky? What image would be stamped on that fair canvas? Round what tree would the snowy bell-flowers of that convolvulus open?

The father never asked himself these questions without an inward shudder.

At this moment the good old man was making his way homeward on his mule, as slowly as though he would fain

spin out to all eternity the road leading from the Castle of Hérouville to Ourscamp, the village near which lay his estate of Forcalier. His unbounded love for his daughter had led him to conceive of a bold scheme indeed. But one man in the world could make her happy, and that was Étienne. Certainly the angelic son of Jeanne de Saint-Savin and the guileless daughter of Gertrude Marana were twin souls. Any other wife than Gabrielle would terrify and kill the heir presumptive to the dukedom, just as it seemed to Beauvouloir that Gabrielle must die in the arms of any man whose feelings and manners had not the virginal gentleness of Étienne's.

The poor leech had never till now thought of such a thing; fate had plotted and commanded this union. But yet, in the time of Louis XIII who would dare to marry the son of the Duc d'Hérouville to the daughter of a Normandy bone-setter? Nevertheless from this union alone could the posterity proceed on which the old Duke was so firmly bent. Nature had destined these two lovely creatures for each other, God had brought them half-way by an extraordinary chain of events, and yet human notions and laws set between them an impassable gulf. Although the old man believed that he herein saw the hand of God, in spite, too, of the promise he had extracted from the Duke, he was in the grip of such extreme alarm as he thought of the violence of that ungoverned temper, that he paused as he came to the top of the hill opposite to that of Ourscamp, whence he saw the smoke rising from his own roof between the trees of his orchard. What decided him was his relationship, though illegitimate, a circumstance that might have some influence over his master's mind. And then, having made up his mind, Beauvouloir put his trust in the chances of life; the Duke might die before the marriage; and besides there were precedents: Françoise Mignot, a Dauphiné peasant girl, had lately married the Maréchal de l'Hôpital; the son of the Constable Anne de Montmorency had

wedded Diane, the daughter of Henri II and a Piémontese lady named Philippa Duc.

While he was thus deliberating, his fatherly affection weighing all the probabilities and calculations, the chances for good or evil, and trying to read the future by studying its factors, Gabrielle was in the garden choosing flowers wherewith to fill a vase made by the illustrious potter who did with his glazed clay what Benvenuto Cellini did with metals. Gabrielle had set this jar, decorated with animals in relief, on a table in the middle of the sitting-room, and was arranging the flowers partly to please her grandmother, but partly perhaps as a means of expressing her thoughts.

The tall earthenware vase of Limoges ware, as it was called, was filled and standing finished on the handsome table-cover, and Gabrielle had exclaimed to her grandmother, 'There! look —' when Beauvouloir came in.

The girl rushed into her father's arms. After the first effusions Gabrielle wanted the old man to admire the posy, and as he looked at it the leech turned a searching gaze on his daughter, making her blush.

'It is high time,' said he to himself, understanding the eloquence of these flowers, each of which had certainly been chosen for its form and colour, so perfectly was it placed to produce a magical effect in the nosegay.

Gabrielle remained standing, unheeding the spray she had begun in her embroidery. As he looked at his daughter, a tear gathered in Beauvouloir's eye, and gliding down his cheeks, which were a little drawn by a grave expression, fell on to his shirt pulled out in front, in the fashion of the time, between the points of his jerkin above his trunk hose. He tossed off his felt hat with its shabby red feather, to pass his hand over his polished crown.

As he glanced once more at the girl who here — under the dark beams of this room hung with leather and furnished in ebony, with heavy silk curtains, a lofty chimney-

place, in a pleasant diffused light — was still all his own, the poor father felt the tears rising and wiped them away. A father who loves his child always longs to keep it young, and the man who can see his daughter pass into the power of a husband without acute grief does not rise superior to higher worlds, but sinks to the meanest depths.

'What ails you, son?' asked his old mother, taking off her spectacles, and seeking in the good man's attitude the reason of a silence that puzzled her in one usually so cheerful.

The physician pointed to his daughter, and the old woman, following the direction of his finger, nodded, as much as to say, 'She is a sweet creature.'

Who could have failed to enter into Beauvouloir's feelings on seeing the maiden as she appeared in the costume of that time and under the clear sky of Normandy? Gabrielle wore the bodice, open with a point in front and square behind, in which the Italian painters generally dressed their saints and madonnas. This elegant bodice, of sky-blue velvet, as sheeny as that of a dragon-fly, fitted her closely, clasping her figure so as to show off the finely modelled form which it seemed to compress; it showed the mould of her shoulders, back, and waist, as exactly as if designed by the most accomplished artist, and was finished round the throat with an oval slope edged with light embroidery in fawn-coloured silk, showing enough to reveal the beauty of her shape, but not enough to suggest desire. A skirt of fawn-coloured stuff that continued the flow of the lines presented by the velvet bodice, fell to her feet in narrow, flattened pleats.

Gabrielle was so slender that she looked tall. Her thin arm hung by her side with the inertia that deep meditation imparts to the limbs; and standing thus she was the living model of those artless-looking masterpieces of sculpture which were then appreciated, and which commend themselves to our admiration by the grace of long lines, straight

without stiffness, and a firmness of outline that is never lifeless.

No swallow skimming past the window at dusk could show a more delicately marked shape. Her features were small but not mean; her brow and throat were marbled with fine blue veins, tinting the skin like agate and betraying the delicacy of a complexion so transparent that you might have fancied you saw the blood flowing within. This extreme fairness was faintly tinged with pink in the cheeks. Her hair, covered with a little blue velvet bonnet embroidered with pearls, lay on her temples like two streams of beaten gold, and played in curls above her shoulders, but did not cover them. The warm tones of this silken hair showed off the brilliant whiteness of her neck, and by its reflection gave added exquisiteness to the pure form of her face. The eyes, rather long and half-shut between somewhat heavy eyelids, were in harmony with the daintiness of her features and figure; their pearly grey was bright but not vivid; innocence veiled passion.

The thin nose would have seemed as cold as a steel blade but for the rosy, velvety nostrils, so expressive as to be out of harmony with the purity of a dreamy brow, often startled and sometimes mirthful, always serenely lofty. Finally, a pretty little ear attracted the eye, by showing beneath the cap between two locks of hair, a ruby earring in bright contrast with her milky white throat. Hers was not the beauty of the Normandy woman, buxom and stout, nor the beauty of the south, in which passion lends nobility to matter, nor the essentially French beauty that is as fugitive as its expression, nor the cold and melancholy beauty of the north; it was the deep seraphic beauty of the Catholic Church, at once pliant and firm, severe and tender.

'Where could you see a prettier duchess?' said Beauvouloir to himself, as he looked with delight at Gabrielle, who, as she stood leaning forward a little, her neck bent

to watch the flight of a bird outside, could only be compared to a gazelle pausing to listen to the murmur of the stream at which it is about to slake its thirst.

'Come and perch here,' said Beauvouloir, slapping his leg, and giving the girl a look that promised some confidential speech.

Gabrielle understood and obeyed. She lightly seated herself on her father's knee, and put her arms round his neck, crumpling his ruff a good deal.

'Now, of whom were you thinking when you were plucking those flowers? You never made a finer posy.'

'Oh, of many things,' said she. 'As I admired those flowers, which seem to be made for us, I wondered for whom we are made,—we human creatures; who the beings are that look at us. You are my father, so I can tell you all I think, and you are so wise that you can explain everything. I feel within me a force, as it would seem, that wants to exert itself; I am struggling with something. When the sky is grey I am almost happy; I am melancholy, but calm. But when the day is fine, and the flowers are sweet, and I am sitting out there on my bench under the honeysuckle and jasmine, I feel as if there were waves inside me surging up against my stillness. Ideas come into my head that seem to hit me and fly away, as the birds fly in the evening; I cannot catch them. Well, and when I have made a posy in which the colours are arranged as they are in tapestry, red against white, and brown mingling with green, when it is full of life and the air blows through it, and the flowers nod, and there is a medley of scents and a tangle of bloom, I fancy I see what is going on in my own mind, and I feel happy. And in church, when the organ sounds and the priest responds, and two distinct strains answer each other, the human voices and the organ, then again I am happy; the harmony rings through my heart; I pray with a warmth that stirs my blood.'

As he listened to his daughter, Beauvouloir studied her

with a sagacious eye; his gaze looked dull from the sheer force of thought, as the smooth curl of a waterfall seems motionless. He lifted the veil of flesh which hid the secret springs by which the spirit acts on the body; he was watching the various symptoms, which long experience had shown him in all the patients committed to his care, and comparing them with symptoms discernible in that frail form, was half alarmed by the delicate structure of those small bones, and the insubstantiality of the milk-white skin; he tried to bring the teaching of science to bear on the future of this seraphic creature, and he felt giddy at finding himself, as it were, on the edge of a gulf. Gabrielle's too thrilling voice, her too graceful form, made him anxious; and, after questioning her, he questioned himself.

'You are not happy here!' he exclaimed at last, prompted by a crowning idea in conclusion of his meditations.

She faintly bowed her head.

'Then God be with us! I will take you to the Château d'Hérouville,' he said with a sigh. 'There you can have sea-baths, which will strengthen you.'

'Do you mean it, father? You are not laughing at your Gabrielle? I have so longed for the castle and the men-at-arms and the captains and Monseigneur.'

'Yes, my child; your nurse and Jean can accompany you.'

'And very soon?'

'To-morrow,' said the old man, rushing out into the garden to hide his agitation from his mother and his daughter.

'God is my witness,' cried he, 'that it is not ambition that prompts this step. My child to save, poor little Étienne to be made happy,—these are my sole motives.'

But while he thus questioned himself, he felt in the depths of his conscience an irrepressible satisfaction at the thought that if his plan should succeed, Gabrielle would one day be Duchesse d'Hérouville. There is always the man in the father.

He walked about for a long time, went in to supper, and all the evening rejoiced in contemplating his daughter amid the soft and sober poetry with which he had surrounded her.

When, before going to bed, the grandmother, the nurse, the leech, and Gabrielle knelt down to pray together, he said: 'Let us beseech the Lord for His blessing on my plans.'

His old mother, who knew what he proposed to do, felt her eyes fill with her few remaining tears. Gabrielle, purely curious, flushed with delight. The father quaked; he feared some disaster.

'After all,' said his mother, 'do not be so alarmed, Antoine. The Duke will not kill his granddaughter.'

'No,' replied he, 'but he may compel her to marry some ruffianly baron who will destroy her.'

Next day Gabrielle, mounted on an ass, followed by her nurse on foot and her father riding a mule, and the man leading two horses loaded with their baggage, set out for the Castle of Hérouville, which the cavalcade reached only at dusk. To keep the journey a secret Beauvouloir had taken cross roads, starting early in the morning, and he had carried provisions so as to take a meal on the way without being seen at the inns. Thus, without being seen by any of the Duke's people, he went in by night to the house which the disowned son had so long inhabited, and where Bertrand was awaiting him, — the only person he had taken into his confidence.

The old squire helped the leech, the nurse, and the man to unload the horses, carry in the baggage, and settle Beauvouloir's daughter in Étienne's dwelling. When Bertrand saw Gabrielle he stood quite amazed.

'I could fancy it was her mother!' cried he. 'She is as slight and fragile as she was; she has the same fair skin and golden hair; the old Duke will love her.'

'God grant it!' said Beauvouloir. 'But will he confess to his own blood mingled with mine?'

'He cannot disown it,' said Bertrand. 'Many a time have I waited for him at the door of the Belle Romaine, who lived in the Rue Culture-Sainte Catherine. The Cardinal de Lorraine was obliged to leave her to Monseigneur for shame at having been so roughly handled as he came out of her house.

'Monseigneur, who at that time was not much past twenty, must remember that ambush well. He was a bold youth already, and I may say now that he was the leader of the assault.'

'He has forgotten all that,' said Beauvouloir. 'He knows that my wife is dead, but he scarcely remembers that I have a daughter.'

'Oh! two old shipmates, as we are, can steer the boat into port,' said Bertrand. 'And, after all, if he is angry and is revenged on our carcasses, they have served their time.'

Before his departure the Duc d'Hérouville had forbidden everybody attached to the castle, under heavy penalties, to go down to the shore where Étienne had hitherto passed his life unless the Duc de Nivron himself should desire their company. These orders, suggested by Beauvouloir, who had argued that it was necessary to leave Étienne free to indulge his old habits, secured to Gabrielle and her nurse the absolute privacy of the precincts whence the leech forbade them wander without his permission.

During these two days Étienne had kept his room, the great state room, lingering over the charms of his melancholy reminiscences.

That bed had been his mother's; close to where he stood she had gone through that terrible scene attending his birth when Beauvouloir had saved two lives. She had breathed her woes to this furniture, it was she who had used it, her eyes had often gazed upon those panels; and

how often had she come to this window to call or signal to her poor boy, now the absolute master of the castle.

Alone in this room, whither he had last come by stealth, brought by Beauvouloir to kiss his dying mother for the last time, he now brought her to life again, spoke to her, listened to her; he would drink deep of the spring that never runs dry, whence so many songs flow that echo *Super flumina Babylonis.*

On the day after his return Beauvouloir waited on his young master, and gently reproved him for having stayed in the room without going out of it, pointing out to him that it would not do to give up his open-air life and become a prisoner.

'This room is spacious,' said the youth; 'and here my mother's soul dwells.'

However, the leech, by the kindly influence of affection, persuaded Étienne to promise to walk out every day, either on the sea-shore, or inland through the country, as yet quite unknown to him. Étienne, notwithstanding, still given up to his remembrances, stood at his window all the next day looking out at the sea; it appeared under such various aspects that he fancied he had never seen it so lovely. He varied his contemplation by reading Petrarch, one of his favourite authors, whose poetry went straight to his heart as a monument of constant and single-hearted love. Étienne felt that he had in himself no power for many passions; he could love but once, and in but one way. Though that love would be deep, like all that is unmingled, it would also be calm in its expression, as suave and pure as the Italian poet's sonnets.

As the sun set, this child of solitude began to sing in that marvellous voice which had fallen as a harbinger of hope on ears so insensible to music as those of his father. He gave utterance to his melancholy by variations on an air which he repeated again and again, like the nightingale. This air, ascribed to the late King Henri IV, was not the

famous '*Air de Gabrielle*' but one very superior to that in construction; and as a melody as well as an expression of feeling, admirers of old-world compositions will recognise it by the words, also written by the great king. The tune had probably been a reminiscence of those that lulled his childhood in the mountains of Béarn.

'Viens, Aurore,
Je t'implore,
Je suis gai quand je te vois;
La Bergère
Qui m'est chère
Est vermeille comme toi.
De rosée
Arrosée,
La rose a moins de fraîcheur;
Une hermine
Est moins fine;
Le lys a moins de blancheur.'

After having thus artlessly expressed his feelings in song, Étienne looked out at the sea and said:—

'There is my betrothed—my one and only love.'

And again he sang these lines of the ballad,

'Elle est blonde
Sans seconde!'

and repeated it as uttering the poetical urgency which rises up in a timid youth, bold only when he is alone. This surging song, with its breaks and its fresh outbursts, interrupted and begun again, till at length it died in a last falling note that grew fainter like the vibrations of a bell, was full of dreams.

At that instant a voice he felt inclined to attribute to some siren risen from the waves, a woman's voice, repeated the air he had just sung, but with the hesitancy natural to a person to whom the power of music is revealed for the

first time; he discerned in it the uncertain language of a heart just awakening to the poetry of harmony. Étienne, who by long exercise of his own voice had learnt the language of song, in which the soul finds as many means of utterance for its thoughts as it does in speech, could divine all the shy surprise that was revealed in this attempt.

With what religious and mysterious admiration did he listen! The stillness of the evening allowed him to catch every sound, and he thrilled as he heard the rustle of a long trailing dress; he was astonished to perceive in himself — accustomed as he was to surprises of terror that brought him within an inch of death — the sense of balm to his soul which of old had come to him at the approach of his mother.

'Come, Gabrielle, my child,' said Beauvouloir's voice. 'I have forbidden you to stay out on the shore after sunset. Go in, my girl.'

'Gabrielle!' thought Étienne. 'What a pretty name!'

Beauvouloir presently appeared on the scene, and roused his master from one of those meditations which are as deep as a dream.

It was quite dark, but the moon was rising.

'Monseigneur,' said the old man, 'you have not been out to-day. That is not right.'

'And I — may I go out on the shore after sunset?' asked Étienne.

The implication conveyed in the question, a first semblance of desire, made the leech smile.

'You have a daughter, Beauvouloir?'

'Yes, my lord, the child of my old age, my beloved little girl. Monseigneur the Duke, your noble father, gave me such strict injunctions to watch over your precious life that, as I could no longer go to Forcalier to see her, I have brought her away, to my great regret; and to conceal her from all eyes I have placed her in the house where your lordship used to live. She is so fragile that I fear every

shock, even too strong an emotion; and I have not allowed her to learn anything, she would have killed herself.'

'Then she knows nothing?' asked Étienne, surprised.

'She has all the skill of a good housewife; but she has grown up as the plants grow. Ignorance, Monseigneur, is a thing as sacred as science. Knowledge and ignorance are two distinct conditions of being; each enwraps the soul as in a winding-sheet. Learning has enabled you to live; ignorance has saved my daughter. The best hidden pearls escape the diver's eye and live happy. I may compare my Gabrielle to a pearl; her complexion has its sheen, her soul is as pure, and till now, my home at Forcalier has been her shell.'

'Come with me,' said Étienne, wrapping a cloak about him. 'I will walk by the sea; the night is soft.'

Beauvouloir and his young master walked on in silence to a spot where a beam of light from between the shutters of the fisherman's house shed a path of gold across the sea.

'I cannot express the feelings produced in me by the sight of a ray cast out across the waters,' said the bashful youth to the leech. 'I have so often watched the window of that room, till the light was extinguished;' and he pointed to the room that had been his mother's.

'Though Gabrielle is so delicate,' said Beauvouloir, cheerfully, 'it will not hurt her to walk with us; the night is hot and there is no mist in the air. I will go to fetch her. But be careful, Monseigneur.'

Étienne was too shy to offer to go into the house with Beauvouloir; besides, he was in the stunned condition into which we are thrown by the high tide of ideas and feelings produced by the dawn of passion.

Feeling more free when he found himself alone, as he looked at the moonlit sea he exclaimed: —

'The ocean must have passed into my soul!'

The sight of the graceful living statuette that now came out to meet him, silvery in the enveloping moonbeams, in-

creased the beating of Étienne's heart, but yet it was not painful.

'My child,' said Beauvouloir, 'this is my lord the Duke.'

At this instant Étienne longed to be a colossus like his father, he would have rejoiced in seeming strong instead of frail. Every vanity natural to a man and a lover pierced his heart like arrows, and he stood in distressed silence, conscious for the first time of his imperfections.

Embarrassed by her courtesy, he bowed awkwardly in return, and remained close to Beauvouloir, with whom he conversed as they walked along the shore; but Gabrielle's respectful and timid manner gave him courage, and he ventured to address her.

The incident of the song was purely accidental; the leech had prepared nothing; he had believed that in two beings whose hearts had been kept pure by solitude, love would arise with perfect simplicity. Thus Gabrielle's repetition of the strain was a ready-made subject of conversation.

During this walk Étienne was aware of that physical lightness which every man has experienced at the moment when first love transfers the very element of his life into another being. He offered to teach Gabrielle to sing. The poor boy was so happy to be able to show himself superior in any respect, in the eyes of this young girl, that he trembled with joy when she accepted.

At that moment the moonlight fell full on Gabrielle, and allowed Étienne to see certain vague points of resemblance between her and his dead mother. Like Jeanne de Saint-Savin, Beauvouloir's daughter was slender and delicate; in her, as in the Duchess, suffering and disappointment produced a mysterious grace. She had the dignity particular to those on whom the customs of the world have had no effect, in whom everything is pleasing because everything is natural. But besides this, there was in Gabrielle the blood of the beautiful Italian revived in

the third generation, and giving the child the vehement passions of a courtesan in a pure soul; hence an inspired look that fired her eyes, that sanctified her brow, that made her radiate light, as it were, and gave her movements the sparkle of living flame.

Beauvouloir was startled as he noted this, which nowadays might be called the phosphorescence of the mind; the leech regarded it as a forecast of death.

Étienne happened to turn as the girl was craning her neck, like a shy bird peeping out of its nest. Screened by her father, Gabrielle was able to study Étienne at her ease, and her expression was as much of curiosity as of pleasure, of kindliness as of artless boldness. Étienne did not strike her as sickly, only as delicate. She thought him so like herself that there was nothing to frighten her in this lord and master. Étienne's pallid face, his fine hands, his feeble smile, his hair parted into two flat bands ending in curls that fell over his lace ruff, the noble brow lined with youthful sorrow,—all this contrast of luxury and sadness and power and weakness charmed her; for did it not smile on the instinct of motherly protection which lies in the germ in love? Did it not stimulate the need that every woman feels to find something unlike the common herd in the man she means to love?

In both of them new thoughts and new sensations rose up with a vigor and fulness that expanded the soul. They both stood surprised and speechless, for the utterance of a feeling is the less demonstrative in proportion to its depth. Every lasting affection begins in dreamy meditation. It was well, perhaps, that these two should meet for the first time under the mild light of the moon so as not to be too suddenly dazzled by the glories of love; and it was fitting that they should see each other on the margin of the sea, which was an image of the immensity of their feelings. They parted full of each other, each fearing that the other had not been satisfied.

From his high window Étienne looked down on the light in the house that held Gabrielle. During that hour of hope mingled with fear, the young poet found new meaning in Petrarca's sonnets. He had seen a Laura — an exquisite and delightful creature, as pure and golden as a sunbeam, as intelligent as the angels, as dependent as a woman. A clue was supplied to his studies for twenty years, he understood the mystical connection of every kind of beauty; he discerned how much of woman there was in the poetry he delighted in; in fact, he had so long been in love without knowing it, that the past was all merged in the agitations of that lovely night. Gabrielle's likeness to his mother he thought a divine dispensation. His love was no treason to his grief; this love was a continuance of motherhood. He could think of the girl lying under the cottage roof with the same feelings as his mother had known when he was sleeping there.

Nay, the resemblance was a fresh link between the present and the past. The mournful countenance of Jeanne de Saint-Savin rose before him against the cloudy background of memory; he saw her faint smile, he heard her gentle voice, and he bowed his head and wept.

The light in the house below was extinguished. Étienne sang the little ballad of Henri IV with fresh expression, and from afar Gabrielle's attempts echoed the song. The girl, too, was making her first excursion into the enchanted realm of ecstatic love. This answer filled Étienne's heart with joy; the blood that flowed through his veins lent him such strength as he had never before known; love gave him vigour. Only feeble beings can conceive of the joy of this regeneration in the midst of life. The poor, the suffering, the ill-used, have ineffable moments; so little makes the whole world to them. And Étienne was related by a thousand traits to the Folk of the Dolorous City. His recent aggrandisement caused him nothing but fear, and love was

bestowing the invigorating balm of strength; he was in love with love.

Étienne was up betimes in the morning to fly to his old home, where Gabrielle, prompted by curiosity and an eagerness she would not confess to herself, had already dressed her hair and put on her pretty costume. Both were possessed by the wish to meet again; both equally dreaded the outcome of the interview. He, for his part, you may be sure, had chosen his finest lace, his richest wrought cloak, his violet velvet trunks; in fact, he was dressed in the handsome fashion which appeals to our memory when we think of Louis XIII, — a person as much oppressed in the midst of splendour as Étienne had hitherto been. Nor was their attire the sole point of resemblance between the sovereign and his subject. In Étienne, as in Louis XIII, many sensitive emotions met in contrast: chastity, melancholy, vague but very real suffering, a chivalrous bashfulness, a fear of failing to express sentiments in their purity, a dread of being too suddenly hurried into the joys which noble souls prefer to postpone, the burthensome sense of power, and the instinctive bent towards obedience which is characteristic of those who are indifferent to mere interest, but full of love for all that a great genius has designated as *Astral.*

Though she had indeed no knowledge of the world, it had occurred to Gabrielle that the daughter of a bone-setter, the humble owner of Forcalier, was too far beneath Monseigneur Étienne, Duc de Nivron, heir to the House of Hérouville, for them to be on equal terms; she never thought of the elevating power of love. The girl was too guileless to think of this as an opportunity for aiming at a position in which any other damsel would have been eager to place herself; she had seen nothing but the obstacles.

Loving already, without knowing what love was, she saw her happiness far away and wished to reach it only as

a child longs for the golden grapes that it covets but that hang too high. To a girl that could be moved to tears at the sight of a flower and be aware of love in the chants of the liturgy, how deep and strong were the emotions of the past day at the sight of the weakness of her lord, bringing comfort to her own. But Étienne had grown in her mind during the night, she had made him her hope, her strength; she had set him so high that she despaired of reaching up to him.

'Have I your permission to call on you sometimes, to intrude on your domain?' asked the Duke, looking down.

As she saw Étienne so humble, so timid,— for he, on his part, had deified Beauvouloir's daughter,— Gabrielle felt the sceptre he had given her an embarrassment. Still she was immensely flattered and touched by this homage. Women alone know how infinitely bewitching is the respect shown to them by a master. But she feared to deceive herself and, quite as curious as the first woman of them all, she pined to *know*.

'Did you not promise yesterday that you would teach me music?' she replied, hoping that music might afford a pretext for their being together.

If the poor child had but known how Étienne lived, she would have been careful to suggest no doubt. To him speech was the direct expression of the mind, and these words pained him deeply. He had come with a full heart, fearing even a dimness in the light, and he was met with a doubtful reply. His happiness was darkened, he was cast back on his solitude, and the flowers had vanished with which he had beautified it.

Gabrielle, enlightened by the presentiment of sorrow that is peculiar to the angels whose task it is to soothe it, and which is no doubt a heavenly charity, at once perceived the pain she had given. She was so shocked at her own blunder that she longed for God-like power to be able to unveil her heart to Étienne, for she had understood the

cruel agitation that can be caused by a reproach or a stern look. She artlessly showed him the clouds that had risen in her soul, forming, as it were, a golden wrapping for the dawn of her affection. One tear from Gabrielle turned Étienne's grief to joy, and then he accused himself of tyranny.

It was a happy thing for them that they thus from the first gauged the measure of each other's heart; they could thus avoid a thousand collisions that would have bruised them. Suddenly, Étienne, feeling that he must entrench himself behind some occupation, led Gabrielle to a table in front of the little window where he had known so much sorrow, and where henceforth he was to gaze on a flower fairer than any he had yet studied. There he opened a book over which they both bent their heads, their curls mingling.

These two, so strong in heart, so feeble in frame, and made beautiful by the grace of suffering, were a touching picture. Gabrielle knew none of woman's arts; she looked at him when he bade her, and the soft beams of their eyes only ceased to regard each other by an impulse of modesty. She had the joy of telling Étienne how much pleasure it gave her to hear his voice; she paid no heed to the meaning of his words when he explained the intervals and value of the notes; she listened, but forgot the melody in the instrument, the idea in the form, — an ingenuous flattery, the first that comes to true love.

Gabrielle thought Étienne handsome; she must feel the velvet of his cloak, touch the lace of his collar. As to Étienne, he was transfigured under the creative light of those bright eyes; they stirred in him a life-giving sap which sparkled in his eyes, shone on his brow, revived, renewed his spirit; and he did not suffer from this fresh play of his faculties, on the contrary, it strengthened him. Happiness was as nourishing milk to this new vitality.

As nothing could divert them from themselves, they remained together not only that day, but every other; for

they were all in all to each other from the first, passing the sceptre from hand to hand, playing as a child plays with life. Sitting quite happy on the golden sands, each told the other the story of the past — to him so painful though full of dreams, to her a dream but full of painful joys.

'I never had a mother,' said Gabrielle, 'but my father was as good as God to me.'

'I never had a father,' replied the disowned son, 'but my mother was all Heaven to me.'

Étienne spoke of his youth, his love for his mother, his fondness of flowers. At this Gabrielle exclaimed; on being questioned she blushed and could not explain; then, when a cloud passed over the brow, which death seemed ever to fan with his wing, on which the soul made visible betrayed Étienne's least emotions, she answered: —

'I, too, used to love flowers.'

Was not this such a confession as maidens make, believing that lovers have been bound even in the past by a common taste? Love always tries to seem old; that is the vanity of children.

Next day Étienne brought her flowers, ordering the rarest, such as of yore his mother would have procured for him. Can any one guess how deeply rooted the fibres may be of a feeling thus reverting to the traditions of maternity, and lavishing on a woman the caressing care by which his mother had beautified his life? To him what dignity there seemed in these trifles which united those two affections!

Flowers and music became the language of their love. Gabrielle replied with posies to those Étienne sent her, such posies as at once showed the old leech that his daughter knew more than he could teach her. The practical ignorance of both the lovers thus formed a dark background against which the slightest incidents of their intimacy, so purely spiritual, stood out in exquisite grace, like the elegant red outline of the figures on a fine Etruscan vase. Each trifling word bore a full tide of meaning, for it was

the outcome of their thoughts. Incapable, both, of any boldness, every beginning to them seemed an end. Though absolutely free, they were prisoners to a guilelessness which would have been heartbreaking to either if they had understood the meaning of their vague emotions. They were at once the poets and the poem. Music, the most sensuous of the arts to loving souls, was the interpreter of their ideas, and it was joy to them to repeat the same strain, pouring out their passion in the wide flood of sound in which their spirits spoke unhindered.

Love often thrives in antagonism, in quarrelling and peacemaking, in the vulgar struggle between mind and matter. But the very first wing-stroke of true love carries it far above these struggles. Two natures cease to be discernible when both are of one essence. Like Genius in its highest expression, Love can dwell in the fiercest light, can endure it and grow in it, and needs no shadow to enhance his beauty.

Gabrielle, in that she was a woman, Étienne, because he had suffered and thought much, soon soared beyond the sphere of vulgar passions and dwelt above it. Like all feeble natures, they were at once soaked in faith, in that heavenly purple which doubles their strength by doubling the soul. To them the sun was always at noon. They soon had that perfect trust in each other which can admit no jealousy, no torturing doubts; their self-sacrifice was always prompt, their admiration unfailing. Under these conditions love brought no pang. Equally feeble, but strong by their union, though the young nobleman had a certain superiority of learning, a certain conventional preëminence, the leech's daughter was more than his match in beauty, in loftiness of sentiment, in the refinement she shed on every pleasure.

And so on a sudden the two white doves flew with equal wing under a cloudless sky. Étienne loved and was loved; the present was serene, the future clear; he was master, the castle was his, the sea was there for them both. No

anxiety disturbed the harmony of their two-part hymn; the virgin innocence of their senses and their mind made the world seem noble, their thoughts flowed on without an effort. Desire, whose satisfaction blights so many buds, the blot on earthly love, had not yet touched them. Like two Zephyrs seated on one branch of a willow-tree, they still were content with contemplating each other's image in the limpid mirror below. Infinitude satisfied them. They could look at that ocean without craving to sail over it in the white-sailed boat with flower-wreathed ropes, of which Hope is the pilot.

There is a moment in love when it is sufficient to itself, happy in mere living. During that springtime when everything is in bud, the lover will often hide from the woman he loves, to see her better and delight in her more. But Étienne and Gabrielle rushed together into the joys of that childlike time; sometimes as two sisters in their artless confidence, sometimes as two brothers in bold inquiry. Love generally presupposes a slave and a divinity; but these two realised Plato's noble dream; they were but one divinity. They cared for each other in turns.

By and by, slowly, kisses came; but as pure as the lively, happy, harmless sports of young animals making acquaintance with life. The feeling which led them to utter their soul in impassioned song invited them to love through the endless aspects of the same happiness. Their delights gave them no delirium, no wakeful nights. This was the infancy of pleasure, growing up unaware of the fine red flowers that will presently crown its stem. They were familiar, never dreaming of danger, breathing their souls out in a word or in a look, in a kiss or in the long pressure of clasping hands. They innocently boasted of their beauty, and in these idylls invented treasures of language, devising the sweetest exaggerations, the most vehement diminutives imagined by the antique Muse of Tibullus and echoed by Italian poets. On their lips and in

their hearts they found the constant play of the foaming wavelets of the sea on the fine sandy shore, all so alike, all so different. Happy, unending fidelity!

Counting by days this time lasted five months; counting by the infinite variety of experience, of thoughts, dreams, and looks, of flowers that blossomed, of hopes fulfilled, of pure delights, — her hair unpinned, elaborately combed out, and then refastened with flowers, conversations interrupted, begun again, and dropped, giddy laughter, feet wetted in the waves, childish hunts for shells hidden among the stones, — by kisses, surprises, embraces, — call it a lifetime and death will justify the word.

Some lives are always dark, worked out under grey skies; but a glorious day when the sun fires a clear atmosphere was the image of the Maytime of their love, during which Étienne hung all the roses of his past life round Gabrielle's neck, and the girl bound up all her future joys with those of her lord.

Étienne had had but one sorrow in his life, his mother's death; he was destined to know but one love, Gabrielle.

The coarse rivality of an ambitious man hurried this honeyed existence to its end.

The Duc d'Hérouville, an old warrior alive to the wiles of others, roughly but skilfully cunning, heard the whispering voice of suspicion after giving the promise demanded of him by Beauvouloir. The Baron d'Artagnon, lieutenant of his company of ordnance, enjoyed his full confidence on all matters of policy. He was a man after the Duke's heart; a sort of butcher, hugely built, tall, of a manly countenance, harsh and stern, a bandit in the service of the King, roughly trained, of an iron will in action but easy to command; a nobleman and ambitious, with the blunt honesty of a soldier and the cunning of a politician. His hand matched his face, the broad, hairy hand of the condottiere. His manners were rude, his speech abrupt and short.

Now the Governor had entrusted his lieutenant to keep an eye on the leech's demeanor with the newly proclaimed heir. In spite of the secrecy maintained with regard to Gabrielle, it was difficult to deceive the commander of a company of ordnance; he heard two voices singing, he saw a light in the evening from the house by the sea. He suspected that all Étienne's care of his person, the flowers he sent for, the orders he gave, must concern a woman; and then he met Gabrielle's nurse in the road, fetching some article of dress from Forcalier, carrying linen or an embroidery frame or some girlish implement.

The soldier determined to see the leech's daughter, and he saw her; he fell in love. Beauvouloir was rich. The Duke would be furious at the good man's audacity. On these facts the Baron d'Artagnon based the edifice of his hopes. The Duke, if he should hear that his son was in love, would certainly want him to marry into some great house, an heiress of landed estate; and to cure Étienne of his passion, all that would be needful was to make Gabrielle faithless by giving her in marriage to a nobleman whose lands were pledged to a money-lender. The Baron himself had no land.

This speculation would have been a grand one with regard to most persons as we find them in the world, but it was destined to fail with Étienne and Gabrielle. Chance, however, had already served the Baron d'Artagnon a good turn.

During his residence in Paris, the Duke had avenged Maximilien's death by killing his son's adversary, and he had heard of an unexpectedly good alliance for Étienne with the heiress to the estates of a branch of the Grandlieu family, a tall and scornful damsel who was, nevertheless, tempted by the hope of one day bearing the name of Duchesse d'Hérouville. The Duke hoped to get his son to marry Mademoiselle de Grandlieu. On hearing that Étienne loved the daughter of a contemptible leech, his

hope became a determination. To him this left no question on the matter. The Duke ordered out his coaches and attendants, and made his way from Paris to Rouen, bringing to his château the Comtesse de Grandlieu, her sister, the Marquise de Noirmoutier, and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, under pretence of showing them the province of Normandy.

For some days before his arrival, though no one knew how the rumour had been spread, everybody, from Hérouville to Rouen, was talking of the young Duc de Nivron's attachment to Gabrielle Beauvouloir, the famous bone-setter's daughter. The good folks of Rouen mentioned it to the old Duke just at the height of a banquet which they were giving him, for the guests were delighted by the notion of annoying the despot of the province. This news excited the Governor's anger to frenzy. He sent orders to the Baron to keep his advent at Hérouville a profound secret, enjoining on him to forefend what he regarded as a disaster.

Meanwhile Étienne and Gabrielle had unwound all the thread of their ball in the vast labyrinth of love, and, equally willing to remain in it, they dreamed of living there. One day they were sitting by the window where so many things had happened. The hours, filled up at first with sweet talk, had led to some thoughtful pauses. They were indeed beginning to feel a vague craving for certain possessions, and had confided to each other their confused notions, reflected from the beautiful imaginings of two pure souls.

During these still, peaceful hours, Étienne had felt his eyes fill with tears more than once as he held Gabrielle's hand pressed to his lips. Like his mother, but happier just now in his love than she had been, the disowned son was gazing at the sea, gold-colour on the strand, black in the distance, and swept here and there into long, white breakers foretelling a tempest. Gabrielle, following the instinct of her lover, also looked at the sea and was silent. A mere look, one of those glances in which two souls ex-

press their mutual reliance, was enough to communicate their thoughts.

The utmost devotion would have been no sacrifice to Gabrielle nor a demand on Étienne's part. They loved with the sentiment which is so divinely one and unchangeable in every instant of its eternity that sacrifice is unknown to it, and it fears no disappointment nor delay. But Étienne and Gabrielle were absolutely ignorant of what might satisfy the craving which agitated their souls.

When the faint hues of twilight had dropped a veil over the sea, and the silence was unbroken, save by the throbbing of the waves on the strand, Étienne stood up, and Gabrielle did the same in vague alarm, for he had dropped her hand. Étienne put his arms round the girl, clasping her to him with firm and tender pressure, and she, sympathising with his impulse, leaned on him with weight enough to let him feel that she was indeed his, but not enough to fatigue him. He rested his too-heavy head on her shoulder, his lips touched her throbbing bosom, his long hair fell on her white shoulders and played on her throat. Gabrielle, in her ingenuous passion, bent her head so as to give his more room, and put her arm round his neck to support herself. And thus they stood, without speaking a word, until night had fallen.

The crickets chirped in their holes, and the lovers listened to their song as if to concentrate all their senses in one.

They could only be likened to an angel with feet resting on earth, awaiting the hour in which he might fly back to heaven. They had realised the beautiful dream of Plato's mystical genius — of all who seek a meaning in human life: they were but one soul; they had become the mysterious pearl that should grace the brow of some unknown star, the hope of us all.

'Will you take me home?' said Gabrielle, the first to break this exquisite stillness.

'Why should you go?' replied Étienne.

'We ought always to be together,' said she.

'Then stay.'

'Yes.'

Old Beauvouloir's heavy footfall was heard in the adjoining room. The doctor found the two young people standing apart; through the window he had seen them embracing. Even the purest love craves for mystery.

'This is not right, my child,' said he to Gabrielle. 'Here still, so late, when it is dark.'

'Why not?' said she. 'You know that we love each other, and he is master here.'

'My children,' said the old man, 'if you love each other, it is necessary to your happiness that you should be married and spend your lives together. But your union must be subject to the will of my lord the Duke ——'

'My father promised to do all I could wish,' cried Étienne, eagerly, interrupting Beauvouloir.

'Then write to him, Monseigneur,' replied the leech. 'Tell him your wishes, and give me your letter to send with one which I have just written to him. Bertrand will set out at once and deliver the missives to Monseigneur himself. I have just heard that he is at Rouen, and is bringing with him the heiress of the House of Grandlieu, not for himself, I imagine. If I obeyed my presentiments I should carry off Gabrielle, this very night.'

'What! divide us?' cried Étienne, half fainting with grief and leaning on the girl.

'Father!' was all she said.

'Gabrielle,' said the old man, giving her a phial which he fetched from a table, and which she held under Étienne's nostrils, 'my conscience tells me that nature intended you for each other. But I meant to prepare my lord for this union which must contravene all his ideas, and the devil has stolen a march on us! This is Monseigneur le Duc de Nivron,' he added to Gabrielle, 'and you are the daughter of a humble leech.'

'My father swore never to oppose me in anything,' said Étienne, calmly.

'Aye, and he swore to me, too, to consent to whatever I might do to provide you with a wife,' replied Beauvouloir. 'But if he should not keep his word?'

Étienne sat down like one stunned.

'The sea was dark this evening,' he said after a short silence.

'If you could ride, Monseigneur,' said the leech, 'I would bid you fly with Gabrielle this very evening. I know you both; any other marriage will be fatal to either. The Duke would of course cast me into his dungeon and leave me to end my days there, on hearing of your flight, but I should die joyful if my death would secure your happiness. But alas! a flight on horseback would risk your life and Gabrielle's too. We must face the Duke's wrath here.'

'Here!' echoed poor Étienne.

'We have been betrayed by somebody in the castle who has stirred up your father's choler,' said Beauvouloir.

'Come, let us throw ourselves into the sea together,' said Étienne, leaning over to speak in Gabrielle's ear, for she was kneeling by her lover's side.

She bowed her head, smiling.

Beauvouloir guessed their purpose.

'Monseigneur,' said he, 'learning as well as native wit has given you eloquence; love must make you irresistible. Confess your love to my lord your father, you will confirm my letter, in itself conclusive. All is not lost, I believe. I love my daughter as well as you love her, and I mean to protect her.'

Étienne shook his head.

'The sea was very dark this evening,' said he.

'It was like a sheet of gold at our feet,' replied Gabrielle in a musical voice.

Étienne called for lights, and sat down at his table to

write to his father. On one side of his chair Gabrielle knelt in silence, watching him write but not reading the words: she read everything on Étienne's brow. On the other side stood old Beauvouloir, his jovial features unwontedly sad, as sad as this room where Étienne's mother had died. A voice within him cried to the old man: —

'He will share his mother's fate!'

The letter finished, Étienne held it out to Beauvouloir, who hurried away to give it to Bertrand.

The old squire's horse stood ready saddled and the man himself was ready: he started and met the Duc d'Hérouville only four leagues away.

'Take me as far as the door of the tower,' said Gabrielle to her lover when they were alone.

They went out through the Cardinal's library and down the turret stair, to the door of which Étienne had given Gabrielle the key. Bewildered by his sense of impending evil, the poor boy left in the tower the torch he had brought to light his lady's steps, and went part of the way home with her. But at a short distance from the little garden that bordered this humble dwelling with flowers, the lovers stood still. Emboldened by the vague terror they both felt, in the darkness and stillness they kissed, — the first kiss in which soul and sense combined to communicate a prophetic thrill of pleasure.

Étienne understood the two aspects of love, and Gabrielle fled for fear of being betrayed into something more — what? She knew not.

Just as the Duc de Nivron was going up the tower stair after shutting the door, a shriek of terror from Gabrielle reached his ear, as vivid as a lightning flash that scorches the sight. Étienne flew through the rooms and down the grand staircase, reached the shore and ran towards the house where he saw a light.

On entering the little garden, by the gleam of the candle standing by her nurse's spinning-wheel, Gabrielle saw a man in the chair instead of the good old woman. At the sound of her steps this man had come to meet her and had startled her.

Indeed, the Baron d'Artagnon's appearance was calculated to justify the terror he had caused the girl.

'You are Beauvouloir's daughter — the Duke's leech?' said the soldier, when Gabrielle had a little recovered from the fright.

'Yes, Monseigneur.'

'I have matters of the highest importance to impart to you. I am the Baron d'Artagnon, lieutenant of the company of ordnance commanded by Monseigneur le Duc d'Hérouville.'

Under the circumstances in which the lovers were placed, Gabrielle was struck by this address and the boldness with which it was spoken.

'Your nurse is in there; she may hear us. Come with me,' said the Baron.

He went out; Gabrielle followed him. They walked out on to the strand behind the house.

'Fear nothing,' said the Baron.

The words would have terrified any one less ignorant; but a simple child who is in love never fears any ill.

'Dear child,' said the Baron, trying to infuse some honey into his accents, 'you and your father stand on the edge of a gulf into which you will fall to-morrow. I cannot see it without giving you warning. Monseigneur is furious with your father and with you. You he imagines have bewitched his son, and he will see him dead rather than your husband. So much for his son! As to your father, this is the determination my lord has come to: Nine years ago your father was accused of a criminal action, the concealment of a child of noble race at the moment of its birth, at which he assisted. Monseigneur, knowing your

father to be innocent, sheltered him from prosecution by law; but he will now have him seized and give him up to justice, applying indeed for a prosecution. Your father will be broken on the wheel; still, in consideration of the services he has done the Duke, he may be let off with hanging. What Monseigneur proposes to do with you I know not; but I know this: that you can save Monseigneur de Nivron from his father's rage, save Beauvouloir from the dreadful end that awaits him, and save yourself.'

'What must I do?' asked Gabrielle.

'Go and throw yourself at the Duke's feet, declare to him that though his son loves you it is against your will, and tell him that you do not love the young Duke. In proof, thereof, offer to marry any man he may select to be your husband. He is generous; he will give you a handsome portion.'

'I will do anything but deny my love,' said Gabrielle.

'But if it is to save your father, yourself, and Monseigneur de Nivron?'

'Étienne,' said she, 'will die of it — and so shall I!'

'Monseigneur de Nivron will be sorry to lose you, but he will live — for the honour of his family. You may resign yourself to be only a baron's wife instead of a duchess; and your father will not be killed,' said the practical Baron.

At this moment Étienne had reached the house; not seeing Gabrielle, he uttered a piercing cry.

'There he is!' exclaimed the girl. 'Let me go to reassure him.'

'I will come to-morrow for your answer,' said the Baron.

'I will consult my father,' she replied.

'You will see him no more. I have just received orders to arrest him and send him to Rouen, chained and under an armed escort,' said Artagnon, and he left Gabrielle stricken with terror.

She rushed into the house and found Étienne horrified

by the silence which was the old nurse's only reply to his first question: —

'Where is she?'

'Here I am,' cried the girl; but her voice was toneless, she was deadly pale, and could scarcely stand.

'Where have you been?' said he. 'You screamed!'

'Yes, I hit myself against ——'

'No, my beloved,' replied Étienne, interrupting her, 'I heard a man's step.'

'Étienne, we have certainly in some way offended God. Kneel down; let us pray. I will tell you all afterwards.'

Étienne and Gabrielle knelt on a prie-dieu; the old nurse told her beads.

'O God!' said the girl, with a flight of soul that bore her far above terrestrial space, 'if we have not sinned against thy holy laws, if we have not offended the Church or the King, — we who together are but one, and in whom love shines like the light Thou hast set in a pearl of the sea, — have this mercy on us that we be not divided either in this world or in the next.

'And thou, dear mother, who art in bliss, beseech the Virgin that if Gabrielle and I may not be happy together, we may at least die together, and without suffering. Call us, and we will go to thee.'

Then, after their usual evening prayers, Gabrielle told him of her interview with the Baron d'Artagnon.

'Gabrielle!' said the youth, finding courage in the despair of love, 'I will stand out against my father.'

He kissed her forehead and not her lips, then he returned to the castle, determined to face the terrible man who crushed his whole life. He did not know that Gabrielle's dwelling was surrounded by men-at-arms as soon as he had left it.

When, on the following day Étienne went to see Gabrielle, his grief was great at finding her a prisoner. But the old nurse came out to him with a message to say that

Gabrielle would die rather than deny him, and that she knew of a way to evade the vigilance of the guards, and would take refuge in the Cardinal's library where no one would suspect her presence; only she did not know when she might achieve her purpose. So Étienne remained in his room where his heart wore itself out in agonised expectancy.

At three o'clock the Duke and his suite reached the castle, where he expected his guests to supper. And, in fact, at dusk, Madame la Comtesse de Grandlieu leaning on her daughter's arm, and the Duke with the Marquise de Noirmoutier came up the great staircase in solemn silence, for their master's stern looks had terrified all his retainers.

Though the Baron d'Artagnon had been informed of Gabrielle's escape, he had reported that she was guarded; he feared lest he should have spoilt the success of his own particular scheme, if the Duke should find his plans upset by the girl's flight.

The two terrible men bore on their faces an expression of ferocity but ill-disguised under the affectation of amiability imposed on them by gallantry. The Duke had commanded his son to be in attendance in the hall. When the company came in, the Baron d'Artagnon read in Étienne's dejected looks that he was not yet aware of Gabrielle's escape.

'This is my son,' said the old Duke, taking Étienne by the hand and presenting him to the ladies.

Étienne bowed without speaking a word. The Countess and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu exchanged glances which the old man did not fail to note.

'Your daughter will be but ill-matched,' said he in an undertone; 'was not that your thought?'

'I thought just the contrary, my dear Duke,' replied the mother with a smile.

The Marquise de Noirmoutier, who had come with her

sister, laughed significantly. This laugh went to Étienne's heart, terrified as he was already by the sight of the tall damsel.

'Well, Monsieur le Duc,' said his father in a low voice, with a jovial chuckle, 'I have found you a handsome mate, I hope! What do you think of that little girl, my cherub?'

The old Duke had never doubted of his son's submission. To him Étienne was his mother's son, made of the same yielding material.

'If he only has a son he may depart in peace,' thought the old man. 'Little I care!'

'Father,' said the lad in a mild voice, 'I do not understand you.'

'Come into your room, I have two words to say to you,' replied the Duke, going into the great bedroom.

Étienne followed his father. The three ladies, moved by an impulse of curiosity, shared by the Baron d'Artagnon, walked across the vast hall and paused in a group at the door of the state bed-chamber, which the Duke had left half open.

'My pretty Benjamin,' said the old man, beginning in mild tones, 'I have chosen that tall and beautiful damsel to be your wife. She is heiress of the lands belonging to a younger branch of the House of Grandlieu, an old and honest family of the nobility of Brittany. So now, be a gallant youth, and recall the best speeches you have read in your books to make yourself agreeable, and speak gallantly as a preface to acting gallantly.'

'Father, is it not a gentleman's first duty to keep his word?'

'Yes.'

'Well, then! When I forgave you for my mother's death, dying here, as she did, because she had married you, did not you promise me never to thwart my wishes? "I myself will obey you as the god of the family!" you said.

Now I do not dictate to you, I only claim freedom to act in a matter which concerns only myself: my marriage.'

'But as I understood,' said the old man, the blood mounting to his face, 'you pledged yourself not to hinder the propagation of our noble race.'

'You made no conditions,' said Étienne. 'What love has to do with the propagation of the race I know not. But what I do know is that I love the daughter of your old friend Beauvouloir, the granddaughter of La Belle Romaine.'

'But she is dead!' replied the old giant, with an expression of mingled mockery and solemnity that plainly showed his intention of making away with her.

There was a moment of utter silence.

The old Duke then caught sight of the three ladies and the Baron.

At this supreme moment, Étienne, who had so keen a sense of hearing, caught the sound from the library of Gabrielle's voice. She, wishing to let her lover know that she was there, was singing the old ballad:—

'Une hermine
Est moins fine;
Le lys a moins de blancheur.'

On the wings of this verse the disowned son, who had been cast into a gulf of death by his father's words, soared up to life again.

Though that one spasm of anguish, so suddenly relieved, had struck him to the heart, he collected all his forces, raised his head, and for the first time in his life looked his father in the face, answering scorn with scorn, as he said with deep hatred:—

'A gentleman should not lie!'

With one spring he reached the door opposite to that leading into the hall, and called out:—

'Gabrielle!'

Then, at once, the gentle creature appeared in the dusk like a lily amid its leaves, trembling in the presence of this trio of mocking women who had overheard Étienne's profession of love.

The old Duke, like a gathering thunder-cloud, had reached a climax of fury that no words can describe; his dark figure stood out against the brilliant dresses of the three court ladies. Most men would have hesitated, at least, between a mésalliance and the extinction of the race; but in this indomitable old man there was the ferocious vein which had hitherto proved a match for every earthly difficulty. He drew the sword on every occasion as the only way he knew of cutting the Gordian knots of life. In the present case, when all his ideas were so utterly upset, his nature was bound to triumph.

Twice detected in a lie by the creature he abhorred, the child he had cursed a thousand times, and now more vehemently than ever at the moment when his despicable weakness — to his father the most despicable kind of weakness — had triumphed over a force he had hitherto deemed omnipotent, the Duke was no longer a father, nor even a man; the tiger rushed out of the den where it lurked. The old man, made young by revengefulness, blasted the sweetest pair of angels that ever vouchsafed to alight on earth, with a look weighted with hatred that dealt death.

'Then die, both of you! — you, vile abortion, the evidence of my dishonour! And you,' he said to Gabrielle, 'slut with the viper's tongue, who have poisoned my race.'

The words carried to the two children's hearts the fell terror of their purpose.

As Étienne saw his father raise his hand and blade over Gabrielle he dropped dead; and Gabrielle, trying to support him, fell dead by his side.

The old man slammed the door on them in a rage, and said to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu: —

'I will marry you myself!'

'And are hale enough to have a fine family!' said the Countess in the ear of the old Duke, who had served under seven kings of France.

Paris, 1831–1836

MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS

To Monsieur Le Comte Georges Mniszech

Some envious persons, when they see one of the oldest and most illustrious of Sarmatian names adorning this page, may imagine that I am endeavouring, as goldsmiths do, to enhance a piece of modern work by the addition of an ancient gem, — a fashion of the day. But you, my dear Count, and a few others, will know that I aim at paying my debt to talent, old memories, and friendship.

In 1479, on All Saints' day, at the moment when this tale opens, vespers were just over in the cathedral of Tours. The Archbishop Hélie de Bourdeilles rose from his throne, himself to pronounce the blessing on the worshippers. The sermon had been lengthy, dusk had fallen before the service was ended, and utter darkness prevailed in many parts of the great church, of which the towers, at that time, were not finished.

However, a considerable number of tapers were burning in honour of the saints, on the triangular frames constructed for the display of these pious offerings, of which the virtue and meaning have never been fully understood. The candles on every altar and the candelabra in the choir were all flaming. These masses of light, irregularly occurring among the forest of pillars and arches that sustain the three aisles of the cathedral, scarcely illuminated the vast body of the church; for, by throwing the deep shadows of the piers across the upper portions of the build-

ing, they gave rise to a thousand fantastic effects which added to the gloom in which arches, vaulting, and chapels were now wrapped, — dark enough as they were even in broad daylight.

The congregation presented effects that were not less picturesque. Some figures were so dimly visible in the doubtful light that they might have been taken for phantoms; others, hit by some side-light, caught the eye like the principal heads in a picture. Statues seemed to live, and men seemed turned to stone. Here and there eyes sparkled in the recess of a pillar; the stone had sight, the marble spoke, the vault reëchoed sighs, the whole structure was endowed with life.

The life of a people can show no more solemn scene, no more majestic moment. Men, in masses, always need action to produce a poetical effect; still, in these homes of religious thought, where human wealth is wedded to celestial splendour, there is an incredible sublimity in silence; there is awe in these bended knees and hope in these uplifted hands. The concord of feeling with which all the assembled souls fly heavenward, produces an indescribably spiritual effect. The mystical exaltation of the united believers reacts on each individual; the feeble are no doubt borne upwards on the full tide of this ocean of love and faith.

Prayer, an electrical force, thus snatches our nature upwards. This involuntary union of so many wills, all equally humbled to earth, all equally lifted to heaven, contains, no doubt, the secret of the magical influences exerted by the chanting of the priests and the music of the organ, the perfume and pomp of the altar, the voice of the crowd and its meditations in silence.

Hence we need not be surprised when we see, in the middle ages, that so many love affairs had their beginnings in church, after long hours of ecstasy — passions which often had no saintly ending and for which the woman, as she always must, ended by doing penance. Religious emo-

tion had certainly, at that time, some affinity with love; it was either the element or the end of it. Love was still a second religion; it still had its fine frenzies, its artless superstitions, its sublime emotion in harmony with those of Christianity.

The manners of the time also help to explain the alliance between religion and love. In the first place, society never mingled but in front of the altar. Lords and vassals, men and women, were nowhere equal but in church. There alone could lovers meet and exchange their vows. Then Church Festivals were the only spectacles; a woman's soul was more deeply stirred within the walls of a cathedral than it now is at a ball or an opera. And does not every strong emotion bring a woman round to love? Thus, by dint of forming part of life, and identifying itself with every act, religion had become the moving principle of virtue and vice alike. Religion was mixed up with science, with politics, with eloquence, with crime; on the throne or in the skin of the poor and suffering; it was all-pervading.

These semi-learned reflections will perhaps certify to the truth of this *Étude*, though some of its details may scandalise the improved propriety of our age — a little too strait-laced perhaps, as we all know.

At the instant when the priests ceased their chanting, the last notes of the organ mingling with the throbbing *Amen* sent out from the deep-chested choir-men, while a faint murmur still lingered under the remoter vaults and the devout assembly awaited the prelate's benedictory words, a citizen, in a hurry to get home, or fearing to lose his purse in the crowd going out, gently stole away, at the risk of being regarded as a bad Catholic. A gentleman, who had lurked till now close to one of the enormous pillars of the choir, where he was shrouded in the shadow, hastened to take the place left vacant by the worthy burgess. As soon as he reached it, he hid his face in the feathers that adorned his tall grey cap, and knelt down

on a chair in a contrite attitude that might have deceived an inquisitor.

His neighbours, having stared curiously at the youth, appeared to recognise him and turned to their devotions once more with a significant shrug, by which they all expressed the same idea — a sarcastic mocking thought, an unspoken scandal. Two old women nodded their heads and exchanged glances which seemed to read the future.

The chair taken by the young man was close to a chapel built in between two pillars, and closed by an iron railing. At that time the Chapter was wont to let out at a high figure the use of the side chapels situated outside the ambulatory, to certain lordly families, who thus had a right to occupy them exclusively, with their people, during divine service. This form of simony is practised even now. A lady had her chapel in church, as in our day she has a box at the opera. The lessees of these privileged nooks were, however, expected to decorate and keep up the altars in them. Thus each one made it a point of honour to make his chapel as sumptuous as possible, a form of vanity very acceptable to the Church.

In this chapel, close to the railing, knelt a young lady, on a handsome square of red velvet with gold tassels, close to the spot but just now occupied by the worthy citizen. A silver-gilt lamp, hanging from the roof of the chapel in front of a magnificent altar, shed a dim light on the Book of Hours that the lady held. This book shook violently in her hand as the young gentleman came towards her.

'*Amen!*' and to this response, chanted in a sweet voice with terrible agitation, happily drowned in the general noise, she added in a low tone: 'You will ruin me!'

The words were spoken with an innocence to which any man of delicate feeling could not fail to submit; it went piercingly to the heart; but the stranger, carried away no doubt by a tumult of passion that stifled his conscience,

remained in his seat, and slightly raised his head to look hastily into the chapel.

'He is asleep,' he replied in a voice so carefully modulated that the words could only be heard by the lady as a sound is heard in its echo.

The young woman turned pale, her eyes were furtively raised for an instant from the vellum page to glance at an old man whom the youth was studying. What a terrible understanding was conveyed by that look! When the lady had examined the old man, she drew a deep breath and raised her beautiful brow, adorned with a precious jewel, to a picture representing the Virgin; this simple gesture and attitude, with her glistening eye, revealed her life with imprudent candour; if she had been wicked, she would have dissimulated her feelings.

The person who inspired such terror in these lovers was a little old hunchback, almost bald, with a fierce expression of face, and a large dingy-grey beard cut square into a broad fan. The Cross of Saint-Michael glittered on his breast; his hands, which were coarse, strong, and rough, with grey hairs, had no doubt been clasped, but had fallen a little apart in the sleep he had so imprudently allowed to overtake him. His right hand seemed about to drop on to the handle of his dagger, of which the hilt was guarded by a large shell of pierced iron; from the way he had arranged the weapon, the handle was just below his hand; if by ill chance he should touch it, beyond a doubt he would wake and look at his wife. His sardonic mouth and the sharp turn of his chin were characteristic signs of a malignant wit, of a coldly cruel shrewdness, which would enable him to guess everything, because he could imagine anything. His yellow forehead was wrinkled like that of a man accustomed to believe nothing, to weigh everything, to test the exact meaning and value of every human action as a miser rings every gold piece. His frame was large-boned and

strongly knit, he might be nervous and consequently irritable — in short, an ogre spoilt in the making.

When her terrible lord should wake, the young lady evidently would be in danger. This jealous husband would not fail to note the difference between the old burgess, whose presence had given him no umbrage, and the newcomer, a young courtier, smart and genteel.

'*Libera nos a malo!*' said she, trying to convey her fears to the young man.

He, on his part, raised his head and gazed at her. There were tears in his eyes, tears of love or despair. Seeing this, the lady started, and lost her head. They had both, no doubt, held out for a long time, and perhaps could no longer resist a passion encouraged day after day by invincible obstacles, brooded by fears, and emboldened by youth. The lady was not perfectly beautiful, but her pale complexion betrayed a secret grief which made her interesting. She was elegant, and had the most magnificent hair imaginable. Watched over by a tiger, she was risking her life perhaps by uttering a word, by allowing her hand to be taken, by meeting his look. If ever love had been more deeply buried in two hearts, or more rapturously confessed, no passion could ever have been more dangerous.

It may easily be understood that to these two beings, the air, the sounds about them, the noise of steps on the pavement, — things utterly indifferent to other men, — had some peculiarities, some perceptible properties which they alone detected. Love enabled them, perhaps, to find a faithful messenger even in the icy cold hands of the old priests to whom they confessed their sins, or from whom they received the Host, kneeling at the altar. It was a deep love, love graven on the soul like a scar on the body which remains for life. As the two young people looked at each other, the woman seemed to say to her lover: 'Let us perish, but be one!' and the gentleman seemed to reply: 'We will be one, but we will not perish!'

But then, with a melancholy jerk of the head, she pointed out to him an elderly duenna and a couple of pages. The duenna was asleep. The pages were but boys, and seemed perfectly reckless of any good or ill that might befall their master.

'Do not be frightened as you go out, but go just where you are led.'

The young man had scarcely murmured these words, when the old gentleman's hand slipped down on to the handle of his weapon. At the touch of the cold iron he woke with a start, and his tawny eyes at once turned to his wife. By a peculiarity rarely bestowed, even on men of genius, he awoke with a brain as alert, and ideas as clear, as if he had never slept. He was jealous.

Though the young man kept one eye on his mistress, he watched her husband out of the other; he rose at once, and vanished behind a pillar, just as the old fellow's hands began to move; then he went off as lightly as a bird. The lady's eyes were fixed on her book. She pretended to be reading, and tried to seem calm; but she could not hinder herself from reddening, nor her heart from beating with unwonted violence.

The old man heard the vehement throbs that were audible in the chapel, and observed the extraordinary flush that had mounted to his wife's cheeks, brow, and eyelids; he looked cautiously about him, but seeing no one whom he could suspect, he said: —

'What is troubling you, *ma mie?*'

'The smell of the incense makes me squeamish,' said she.

'Then is it not good to-day?' said he.

In spite of this comment, the wily old man affected to believe in this excuse; still, he suspected some secret treason, and resolved to watch more carefully over his treasure.

The Benediction was pronounced. The crowd, without waiting for the end of *in secula seculorum*, hurried to the church door like a torrent. The old lord, as was his cus-

tom, waited quietly till the general rush was moderated, and then went forth, sending the duenna in front with the youngest page, who carried a lantern on a pole; he gave his arm to his wife, and the other page followed. Just as the old gentleman had reached the side door opening into the eastern part of the cloisters, by which he usually went out, a crowd of people turned back from the mass that was blocking the front porch, surging in towards the aisle where he and his people were standing, and this compact body prevented his retracing his steps. The gentleman and his wife were, in fact, pushed out by the tremendous pressure of the crowd. The husband tried to get through first, dragging the lady by the arm; but at this juncture he was violently pulled into the street, and his wife was snatched from him by a stranger.

The sinister hunchback at once understood that this was a deep-laid plot into which he had fallen. Repenting now of his long nap, he collected all his strength; with one hand he clutched at his wife's gown, and with the other he tried to cling to the door post. But the frenzy of love won the day from the fury of jealousy. The young man took his mistress round the waist, and snatched her away with such strength of despair that the tissue of silk and gold, the brocade, and whalebone gave way, and split with a crash. The sleeve was left in her husband's hand.

A roar like a lion's rose above the shouts of the multitude, and an awful voice was heard bellowing these words: —

'Help! Poitiers! Here, to the door! The Comte de Saint-Vallier's people! Help, this way, help!'

And the Comte Aymar de Poitiers, Sire de Saint-Vallier, tried to draw his sword, and get a way cleared for him to pass; but he found himself closely surrounded by thirty or forty gentlemen whom it would have been dangerous to wound. Several of these, men of the highest rank, answered him with gibes, as they hauled him out to the cloister.

The ravisher, with the swiftness of lightning, had led the Countess to an open chapel, where he found her a seat on a wooden bench behind a confessional. By the light of the tapers burning before the image of the saint to whom the chapel was dedicated, they looked at each other for a moment in silence, clasping hands, and mutually amazed at their daring. The Countess had not the heart to blame the young man for the audacity to which she owed this first and only instant of happiness.

'Will you fly with me into the adjacent territory?' he asked her eagerly. 'I have at hand a pair of English jennets which will carry us thirty leagues without drawing rein.'

'Oh,' cried she sweetly, 'where in the world can you find asylum for a daughter of Louis XI?'

'To be sure,' replied the gentleman, bewildered by this difficulty, which he had overlooked.

'Why, then, did you tear me from my husband?' she asked in some terror.

'Alas!' replied he, 'I had not thought of the agitation I should feel on finding myself by your side, on hearing you speak to me. I had conceived of two or three plans, and now that I see you, I feel as if everything were achieved.'

'But I am lost,' said the Countess.

'We are saved,' replied the gentleman, with the blind enthusiasm of love. 'Listen to me ——'

'It will cost me my life,' she went on, letting the tears flow which had gathered in her eyes. 'The Count will kill me, — this evening, perhaps. But go to the King, tell him of all the torments his daughter has endured for five years past. He loved me well when I was a child. He was wont to laugh and call me Mary-full-of-grace because I was so ugly. Oh, if he could know to what a man he gave me, he would be in a terrible rage! I have never dared to complain, out of pity for the Count. And, besides, how should my voice reach the King's ears? My con-

fessor even is a spy for Saint-Vallier. I therefore lent myself to this criminal escape, in the hope of enlisting a champion. But — dare I trust — Oh!' she cried, breaking off and turning pale; 'here is the page.'

The unhappy Countess tried to make a veil of her hands to hide her face.

'Fear nothing,' said the young man; 'he is on our side. You may make use of him in all security; he is mine. When the Count comes in search of you, he will warn us in time. In that confessional,' he went on in an undertone, 'is a canon who is a friend of mine. We will say that he has rescued you from the fray and led you, under his protection, to this chapel. Thus everything is prepared for deceiving Saint-Vallier.'

On hearing this, the Countess dried away her tears, but her brow was clouded with alarm.

'There is no deceiving him,' said she. 'He will know everything this evening. Beware of his revenge. Go to Le Plessis, see the King, tell him that ——'

She hesitated, but something gave her courage to tell the secrets of her married life, and she went on.

'Yes, tell him that to secure his mastery over me the Count has me bled in both arms and exhausts me. Tell him he has dragged me by my hair — tell him I am a prisoner — say that ——'

Her heart was bursting, sobs choked her throat, a few tears fell again, and in her agitation she allowed the young man to kiss her hand while he uttered incoherent phrases.

'No one may speak to the King, poor child! Though I am the nephew of the grand captain of the crossbowmen, I cannot get into Le Plessis this night. My beloved lady, my beautiful queen! — Good God! how she has suffered! Marie, let me say two words to you or we are lost!'

'What is to become of us?' said she.

The Countess discerned on the blackened wall a picture of the Virgin on which the light fell, and she cried out: —

'Holy Mother of God, give us counsel.'

'To-night,' the gentleman went on, 'I will be in your house.'

'How?' she asked, very simply.

They were in such great peril that their fondest words seemed bereft of tenderness.

'I am going this evening to propose myself as an apprentice to Maître Cornélius, the King's treasurer. I have succeeded in obtaining a letter of introduction which will secure his receiving me. His house is close to yours. Once under that old rascal's roof, by the help of a silken ladder I can find my way to your rooms.'

'Oh!' cried she, petrified with dismay, 'if you love me, do not go to Maître Cornélius.'

'Why!' cried he, clasping her to his heart with all strength of his youth. 'Then you love me?'

'Yes,' said she. 'Are you not my only hope? You are a gentleman; I place my honour in your hands. And indeed,' she went on with dignified confidence, 'I am too unfortunate for you to betray my trust. But to what end is all this? Go, leave me to die rather than take up your abode with Cornélius. Do you not know that all his apprentices ——'

'Have been hanged?' said the gentleman, laughing. 'Do you suppose that his treasure tempts me?'

'Nay, nay, do not go there; you will be the victim of some sorcery.'

'I cannot pay too dearly for the honour of serving you,' replied he, giving her a look of such ardour as made her lower her eyes.

'And my husband?' said she.

'Here is something to send him to sleep,' replied the young man, taking a small phial out of his belt.

'Not for ever?' said the Countess, trembling.

The young man's reply was a gesture of horror.

'I would have challenged him to single combat, if he

were not so old,' he said. 'But God forbid I should rescue you from him by giving him a philter.'

'Forgive me,' said the Countess, blushing. 'I am cruelly punished for my sins. In a moment of despair I did wish to kill the Count; I feared lest you might wish the same. My grief is great that I have not yet had an opportunity of confessing that wicked thought, but I feared that he would be told of it and he would be revenged. You are ashamed of me?' she added, hurt by the young man's silence. 'I deserve your blame!'

She flung the phial violently to the ground, and it broke.

'Do not come,' she went on; 'the Count sleeps lightly. It is my duty to await the aid of Heaven. And that is what I will do.'

She rose to go.

'Ah!' cried the young man, 'bid me kill him, and I will do it, Madame. You will see me this evening.'

'I was wise to waste that drug,' she replied, her voice husky with the joy of finding herself so ardently beloved. 'The dread of awaking my husband will save us from ourselves.'

'I plight my life to you,' said the youth as he held her hand.

'If the King desires it, the Pope may annul my marriage; then we may be united,' said she, giving him a look full of rapturous hope.

'Here comes Monseigneur,' cried the page, hurrying up.

Instantly the gentleman, amazed at the shortness of the time he had spent with his mistress, and at the Count's swift movements, snatched a kiss which the lady could not refuse.

'This evening!' he repeated, as he slipped out of the chapel.

Favoured by the darkness, the lover made his way to the great entrance, creeping from pillar to pillar along

the shaft of shadow cast across the church by each great column.

An old canon suddenly stepped out of the confessional and seated himself by the Countess, after gently closing the gate, while the page marched gravely up and down outside, with the composure of an assassin.

A glare of light heralded the Count; escorted by a party of friends and retainers carrying torches, he himself held his drawn sword. His gloomy gaze seemed to pierce the darkness, and search the deepest corners of the cathedral.

'Monseigneur, Madame is here,' said the page, going to meet him.

The Lord of Saint-Vallier found his wife kneeling in front of the altar, and the canon standing by her, reading his breviary. At this sight he shook the gate furiously as if to give vent to his rage.

'What are you doing with a naked sword in hand in this church?' asked the priest.

'Father, this gentleman is my husband,' said the Countess.

The priest took the key out of his sleeve and opened the chapel gate. The Count almost involuntarily glanced round the confessional, and then went into it; then he stood listening to the silence of the place.

'Monsieur,' said his wife, 'you owe your thanks to this venerable canon who gave me shelter here.'

The Sire de Saint-Vallier turned pale with anger, and dared not look at his friends, who had come to laugh at him rather than to help him. He sharply replied: —

'Thank the Lord, Father. I will find some way to repay you.'

He took his wife by the arm, and without giving her time to make her courtesy to the canon, he signed to his people and went away, without a word to those who had given him their company. There was something ominous in his silence.

Impatient to be at home, and puzzling his brain for some means of discovering the truth, he made his way along the winding streets which at that time led from the cathedral to the porch of the Chancery office, where stood the noble mansion then recently built by the Chancellor Juvénal des Ursins, on the site of an old fortress given by Charles VII to that faithful servant as a reward for his splendid services. There began a street which has since been named Rue de la Scellerie, in memory of the office of the Great Seal which long stood there. It connected old Tours with the borough of Châteauneuf, where stood the famous Abbey of Saint-Martin, of which many kings were content to be canons. For about a hundred years, and after long discussions, this borough had been incorporated with the city.

Many of the streets adjacent to the Rue de la Scellerie, in the heart now of modern Tours, were already built; but the finest houses, and more particularly that of the Treasurer Xancoings, still standing in the Rue du Commerce, were actually situated in the commune of Châteauneuf.

It was past this that the Sire de Saint-Vallier's torch-bearers led the way, to that part of the town which lay by the river Loire; he mechanically followed, casting a dark glance now and again at his wife and at the page, hoping to detect a look of mutual understanding between them which might throw some light on this most puzzling adventure.

At last the Count found himself in the Rue du Mûrier, where his house was. When the whole party had gone in, and the ponderous gate was shut, profound silence reigned in the narrow street where a few magnates at that time resided; for this side of the town was near to Le Plessis, the King's usual residence, enabling the courtiers to attend him at a moment's notice. The last house in this street was the last house in the town, and belonged to Maître Cornélius Hoogworst, an old merchant from Brabant, whom the

King Louis XI honoured with his confidence in such financial transactions as his astute policy required outside his realm. For reasons favouring the tyranny he exerted over his wife, the Comte de Saint-Vallier had settled in a mansion adjoining Maître Cornélius' house.

The topography of the buildings will explain the advantages they offered to a jealous husband. The Count's house, known as the Hôtel de Poitiers, had a garden, shut in on the north by the wall and moat that had been the boundary of the ancient borough of Châteauneuf skirted by the embankment then lately constructed by Louis XI between Tours and Le Plessis. On that side dogs defended the entrance to the premises, which, on the east, were divided from the neighbouring houses by a large court-yard, and on the west backed on to the house occupied by Maître Cornélius. The street front faced south. Thus isolated on three sides, the suspicious and wily old Count was safe against all intruders but the inhabitants of the Brabant house, of which the roofs and chimneys were undistinguishable from those of the Hôtel de Poitiers. The windows to the street were narrow, cut in the stone walls, and barred with iron; the door, low and arched like the entrance to our ancient prisons, was strong enough to resist any attack. A stone bench for mounting on horseback was close to the porch.

On seeing the side view of the houses occupied by Maître Cornélius and the Comte de Poitiers, it could easily be supposed that they had both been built by the same architect, and constructed for tyrants. Both, with their sinister appearance, resembled little strongholds, and would have stood a siege for some time against a furious mob. They were protected by turrets at the corners, such as lovers of antiquities may yet see in some towns where the hammer of the destroyer has not found employment. The openings, which were everywhere narrow, allowed of the shutters and doors being constructed of extraordinary strength and clamped with iron. The riots and civil wars which were

so frequent in those quarrelsome times amply justified these precautions.

As six o'clock struck by the clock of the Abbey of Saint-Martin, the Countess' lover walked past the Hôtel de Poitiers, pausing a moment to hear the noise made by the Count's retainers over their supper. After glancing up at the room he might suppose to be that of his lady-love, he went on to the door of the next house. Everywhere on his way the young man had heard sounds of mirth from the feasters in every house doing honour to the holyday. From every window ineffectually shuttered came beams of light; chimneys were smoking, and the savour of roast meats gave cheer to the streets. Religious service being over, the whole town was revelling, and giving out confused sounds which the imagination can fancy better than words can describe them.

But here there was total silence; for in these two houses dwelt passions which never rejoice. Beyond them the open country was still; and here, under the shadow of the abbey towers of Saint-Martin, the two dumb houses, apart from the rest and standing in the darkest part of the tortuous street, looked like a leper's home. The building opposite to them belonged to certain state criminals, and was under sequestration. Any young man could not fail to be easily impressed by so sudden a contrast. And, indeed, on the verge of embarking in a horribly perilous enterprise, the gentleman stood pensive in front of the goldsmith's house, recalling the various tales he had heard of Maître Cornélius and his proceedings, which had inspired the Countess with such lively fears.

At that period a warrior, a lover even, every man quaked at the word "magic." There were few imaginations that could be incredulous of extraordinary facts, or indifferent to tales of wonder. And this lover of Madame de Saint-Vallier (one of Louis XI's daughters by Madame de Sassenage, in Dauphiné), brave as he might be, could not but

think twice before venturing into a house that was full of sorceries.

The history of Maître Cornélius Hoogworst will fully account for the confidence he had inspired in the Comte de Saint-Vallier, for the lady's terror, and for the hesitancy that gave pause to the lover. But to enable the nineteenth century reader to understand clearly how events apparently commonplace had been deemed supernatural, to make him enter into the terrors of that olden time, it is necessary to interrupt the narrative and glance at the previous career of Maître Cornélius.

Cornélius Hoogworst, one of the wealthiest merchants of Ghent, having incurred the displeasure of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, had found a refuge and protection at the Court of Louis XI. The King was quite alive to the advantages he might derive from a man in communication with the principal houses of Flanders, Venice, and Brabant; he granted to Maître Cornélius letters of nobility and naturalization; nay, he flattered him, — a rare thing with Louis XI. And, indeed, the Fleming liked the King as well as the King liked the Fleming. Crafty, suspicious, avaricious; equally astute, equally well-informed, equally superior to their time, they understood each other to perfection; they dropped and took up again with equal readiness, the one his conscience and the other his religion; they worshipped the same Virgin — one from conviction, the other from flattery; finally, if we may believe the jealous statements of Olivier le Daim and Tristan, the King resorted to the goldsmith's house to take his pleasure — as Louis XI took it. History has taken care to preserve the memory of this monarch's licentious tastes, for he was not averse to a debauch. The old Fleming, no doubt, found it pleasant and profitable to lend himself to his royal patron's caprices and indulgences.

Cornélius had now lived in Tours for nine years. During these nine years incidents had occurred under his roof which made him the object of general execration. On

arriving he had spent large sums on the house, with a view to securing his treasures. The ingenuity secretly exerted on his behalf by the locksmiths of the town, the singular precautions he had taken to get them into his house, in such a way as to feel sure of their compulsory secrecy, were for a long time the subject of a thousand wonderful tales which furnished the evening gossip of Touraine. The old man's extraordinary devices led to the idea that he was possessed of Oriental wealth. The story-tellers of the province which was the birthplace of romance in France built chambers of gold and precious stones in the Fleming's dwelling, never failing to ascribe his immense riches to unholy compacts.

Cornélius had brought with him originally a couple of Flemish varlets, an old woman, and a young apprentice of mild and attractive appearance; this youth served him as secretary, cashier, factotum, and messenger.

In the course of the first year of his residence at Tours, a considerable robbery was effected from his premises. Judicial investigation proved that the theft had been committed by someone living in the house. The old miser had his two men and his apprentice put in prison. The young lad was weakly; he died under torture, still protesting his innocence. The two men confessed, to escape torture; but on being asked by the judge where the stolen money was hidden, they were silent; so, after fresh tortures, they were tried, condemned, and hanged. On their way to the gallows they still declared that they were guiltless, after the manner of all men to be hanged.

The town of Tours talked over the strange business for many a day. But the criminals were Flemings, so the interest excited in the unfortunate men and the youthful clerk soon died out. In those days war and sedition supplied perpetual excitement, and to-day's drama extinguished yesterday's tragedy.

Maître Cornélius, more affected by the loss of so large

a sum than by the death of his three retainers, now lived alone with the old woman who was his sister. He obtained from the King the privilege of using the state couriers for his private business, put up his mules with a muleteer in the neighbourhood, and thenceforth lived in perfect solitude, seeing scarce anyone but the King, and transacting his business through the medium of the Jews — crafty arithmeticians, who served him faithfully for the sake of his omnipotent interest.

Some time after this event, the King himself placed with his old *torçonnier* a young orphan in whom he took a great interest. Louis XI commonly called Maître Cornélius by the old name of *torçonnier*, which, in the reign of Saint-Louis, had meant an usurer, a tax-collector, a man who squeezed money out of folks by extortionate means. The word *tortionnaire*, a legal term still in use, in fact, explains the word *torçonnier*, which was often written *tortionneur*. This poor lad devoted himself to the goldsmith's interest, succeeded in satisfying his master and winning his favour. One winter's night the diamonds placed in Cornélius' keeping by the King of England were stolen, and suspicion fell on the orphan lad. Louis XI was all the more severe with him because he had answered for his honesty. So, after a summary inquiry, the hapless boy was hanged before the Provost Marshal.

Nobody dared go to learn the arts of banking and exchange from Maître Cornélius. Nevertheless two young men of the town, youths of honour and anxious to win a fortune, one after the other entered his service. Large robberies from the treasurer's house at once ensued; the circumstances of the crimes, and the way in which they were carried out, pointed clearly to some collusion between the thieves and the inmates of the house; it was impossible that the new-comers should escape accusation. The Fleming, more and more vindictive and suspicious, at once laid the matter before the King, who placed the cases in his

Provost's hands. Each was promptly tried, and more promptly punished.

But the patriotism of the citizens was opposed to Tristan's swift proceedings. Guilty or no, the two young men were regarded as victims, and Cornélius as a ruffian. The two families thrown into mourning were persons in high esteem, their complaints met with sympathy, and step by step they succeeded in persuading everyone to believe in the innocence of all the men that the King's treasurer had sent to the gallows. Some declared that this cruel miser was imitating the King and trying to set terror and the gibbet between himself and the world; that he had never been robbed at all; that these horrible executions were brought about by cold self-interest; and that he only wanted to be quit of all alarms about his treasure.

The immediate result of these popular rumours was to isolate Cornélius. The good folks of Tours treated him as one plague-stricken, spoke of him as the extortioner, and called his house La Malemaison (the House of Ill). Even if the usurer could have found a youth bold enough to take service with him, the inhabitants of the town would have hindered it by their sayings. The most favourable opinions about Maître Cornélius were those expressed by men who regarded him only as a sinister personage. In some he inspired involuntary terrors, in others, the deep respect that is always paid to unlimited power or great wealth; to some he had the attraction of mystery. His mode of life, his countenance, and the King's favour justified every rumour of which he was the subject.

Since the death of his persecutor, the Duke of Burgundy, Cornélius frequently travelled in foreign parts, and during his absence the King had his house guarded by a company of his Scottish guard. This royal care led the courtiers to suppose that the old man had left his fortune to Louis XI. The Fleming rarely went out; the gentlemen about the Court visited him frequently; he was ready enough to lend

them money, but he was whimsical. On certain days he would not give them a sou *Parisis;* on the morrow he would offer them enormous sums, always at a high rate of interest and on good security. He was, however, a good Catholic, and attended the services regularly; but he went to Saint-Martin at a very early hour, and as he had purchased a chapel in perpetuity, there, as elsewhere, he was divided from other Christians.

A proverb which became popular at this period and survived at Tours for a long time was the saying: 'You have crossed the usurer's path; woe will befall you.' 'You have crossed the usurer's path' accounted for sudden ailments, involuntary depression, and the evil turns of fortune. Even at Court Cornélius was credited with the fatal influence which, in Italy, Spain, and the East, superstition has named the Evil Eye.

But for the terrible power of Louis XI, which was extended like a shield over this house, the populace would, on the slenderest pretext, have demolished the Malemaison of the Rue du Mûrier. And yet it was by Cornélius that the first mulberry trees in Tours had been planted, and at that time the inhabitants had regarded him as a good genius. Who then may trust to popular favour?

Certain gentlemen who had met Maître Cornélius in foreign lands had been amazed by his good humour. At Tours he was constantly gloomy and absent-minded; but he always came back there. Some inexplicable attraction always brought him home to his dismal house in the Rue du Mûrier. Like the snail whose life is inseparable from that of his shell, he confessed to the King that he never felt so happy as behind the time-eaten stones, the bolts of his little bastille, albeit he knew that in the event of Louis' death it would be the most dangerous spot on earth to him.

'The devil is amusing himself at the expense of our friend the *torçonnier*,' said Louis XI to his barber, a few days before the festival of All Saints. 'He complains of

having been robbed again! But there is nobody this time for him to hang — unless he hangs himself. If the old vagabond did not come to ask me whether I had carried off by mistake a chain of rubies he had been meaning to sell me? By the Mass! I do not steal what I have only to take, said I.'

'And was he frightened?' asked the barber.

'Misers are afraid but of one thing,' replied the King. 'My gossip the usurer knows full well that I should not flay him for nothing; otherwise I should be unjust, and I have never done anything that was not just and necessary.'

'And yet the old hunks cheats you,' replied the barber.

'You only wish that were true, heh?' said the King, with a cunning leer at the barber.

'Nay, Sire,' replied the man, with an oath; 'but there would be a snug fortune to divide between you and the devil.'

'That will do,' said the King. 'Do not put mischief into my head. My gossip is a more faithful friend than all the men whose fortunes I have made — possibly because he owes me nothing.'

Thus, for two years past, Cornélius lived alone with his sister, who was believed to be a witch. A tailor who lived hard by declared that he had often seen her at night waiting on the roof to fly off to her Sabbath. This statement was all the more extraordinary because the old miser shut his sister up in a room of which the windows were barred with iron.

Cornélius in his old age, fearing more and more that men should rob him, had conceived a hatred for all the world excepting the King, whom he esteemed highly. He had sunk into deep misanthropy; but, in his passion for gold, the assimilation of the metal with his very substance had become more and more complete, and, as is commonly the case with misers, his avarice increased with age. He was suspicious even of his sister, though she was perhaps more

avaricious and thrifty than himself, and outdid him in sordid inventiveness. There was something mysterious and questionable in their way of life. The old woman so rarely took bread from the baker, and was so seldom seen at market, that the least credulous observers had at last attributed to these strange beings the knowledge of some occult means of sustaining life. Some, who meddled in alchemy, said that Maître Cornélius could make gold. The learned declared that he had discovered the universal panacea. And to most of the country folk, when the townspeople spoke of him, he was a chimerical creature, so that they would come out of curiosity to stare at his house.

The young gentleman, sitting on a bench by the house facing that of Maître Cornélius, looked at the Malemaison and the Hôtel de Poitiers by turns. The moon shed high lights on the salient parts, lending colour by the contrast of light and shade on the sculpture in relief. The play of this capricious pale light gave a somewhat sinister expression to both houses. Nature seemed to lend herself to the superstitious notions that hung about the place.

The gentleman recalled all the many traditions which made Cornélius an object at once of curiosity and dread. Though the vehemence of his passion confirmed him in his determination to get into the house and to stay there as long as might be necessary to carry out his projects, he hesitated before taking this final step, though well aware that he should do so. But who, in the critical hours of life, does not love to listen to presentiments and play see-saw, as it were, over the abyss of futurity? As a lover worthy of his love, the youth feared lest he should perish before the Countess' love should grace his life.

This secret hesitancy was so painfully absorbing that he did not feel the cold wind that blew round his legs and against the projecting masses of the houses. If he entered

the goldsmith's service, he must renounce his name, as he had already doffed his handsome garb as a nobleman. In the event of disaster, he could make no appeal to the privileges of his birth or the protection of his friends but at the cost of destroying the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier beyond all rescue. If the old lord suspected her of having a lover, he was capable of roasting her in an iron cage by a slow fire, of torturing her to death day by day in the depths of some dungeon.

As he looked down on the wretched clothes in which he was disguised, the gentleman was ashamed of his own appearance. To behold his black leather belt, his clumsy shoes, his wrinkled hose, his frieze breeches, and his grey cloth jerkin, he might be the follower of some mean sergeant of the law. To a nobleman of the fifteenth century it was as bad as death to play the part of pauper townsman and renounce the privileges of his rank. Still, to climb the roof of the mansion where his mistress sat weeping; to creep down the chimney or run along the parapet, crawling from gutter to gutter till he reached her window; to risk his life, if only he might sit by her side on a silken cushion, in front of a good fire, during the slumbers of that sinister husband, whose snore would enhance their rapture; to defy heaven and earth; to exchange the most audacious embrace; to speak words which would inevitably be punished by death, or at least by a bloody struggle, — all these enchanting visions, with the romantic perils of the adventure, brought him to a decision. The smaller the prize of his endeavour, — were it only to be that he should once more kiss his lady's hand, — the more determined was he to dare everything, prompted by the chivalrous and impassioned spirit of the time. Then he did not really suppose that the Countess would dare to refuse him the sweetest reward of love, in the midst of such mortal dangers. The adventure was too perilous, too impossible, not to be carried through to the end.

At this juncture every bell in the town rang the curfew. The law had fallen into disuse, but in the provinces the hour was still tolled, for customs die slowly in the country. Though the lights were not put out, the captains of the watch stretched chains across the streets. Many doors were bolted and barred; the steps of a few belated citizens were heard in the distance as they made their way, surrounded by their followers, armed to the teeth and carrying lanterns; and then, ere long, the town, gagged as it were, seemed to fall asleep, fearing no attack from malefactors, unless by way of the roof.

And at that time the house-tops were a recognised highway during the night. The streets were so narrow in country towns, and even in Paris, that robbers could jump from one side to the other. This dangerous game was a constant amusement to King Charles IX in his youth, if we may believe the memoirs of the time.

Fearing to be too late in presenting himself to Maître Cornélius, the young gentleman was on the point of rising to knock at the door of the House of Evil, when, on looking at it, his attention was riveted by a sort of vision, such as the writers of the day would have called diabolical. He rubbed his eyes as if to clear them, and a thousand different emotions flashed through his brain. On each side of the door he beheld a face framed between the bars of a sort of loophole. At first he supposed these faces to be grotesque masks carved in stone, so wrinkled were they, so angular, twisted, exaggerated, and motionless; they were tanned, — that is to say, brown; but the cold and the moonlight enabled him to detect the slight white cloud of thin breath coming out of the two blue noses, and at last he could make out in each haggard face, under shaggy eyebrows, a pair of china-blue eyes that sparkled with a pale light, like those of a wolf crouching in a thicket when he hears the hounds in full cry. The uneasy gleam of those eyes rested so fixedly on him, that, after meeting it

during the moment when he was studying these singular objects, he felt like a bird put up by a sporting dog; a fevered spasm clutched at his heart, but was at once controlled. These two faces were beyond a doubt those of Cornélius and his sister.

The gentleman at once affected to be examining the street and to be in search of a dwelling of which the address was written on a card that he took out of his pocket, trying to read it by the moonlight; he then went straight up to the extortioner's door and gave three knocks, which echoed within the house as if this were the portal of a cellar. A small light became visible, and an eye was applied to a small and strongly barred wicket.

'Who is there?'

'A friend, sent by Oosterlinck of Bruges.'

'What do you want?'

'To be let in.'

'Your name?'

'Philippe Goulenoire.'

'Have you letters of introduction?'

'Here they are.'

'Put them in through the box.'

'Where is it?'

'To the left.'

Philippe Goulenoire put the letter into a slit in an iron chest below a loophole window.

'The devil!' thought he. 'It is evident that the King comes here, for as many precautions are observed as he takes at Le Plessis.'

He waited in the street about a quarter of an hour longer. At the end of that time he heard the old man say to his sister: —

'Shut the traps inside the door.'

Then a clatter of chains and iron echoed through the porch. Philippe heard bolts drawn and locks creak; finally a small, low door, sheathed with iron, opened so as to

afford the smallest chink through which a man might squeeze. At the risk of tearing his clothes, Philippe crept rather than walked into the Malemaison. A toothless old woman with a face like a fiddle, and eyebrows like the handles of a cauldron, who could not have put a nut between the tip of her nose and her chin, colourless, sallow, with hollow temples and an appearance of being constructed of nothing but bone and sinew, silently led the stranger into a low sitting-room, while Cornélius prudently kept in the rear.

'Be seated there,' said she to Philippe, pointing to a three-legged stool that stood in the corner of a huge chimney-place of carved stone, though there was no fire on the hearth.

On the opposite side of this fireplace was a walnut-wood table with twisted legs, on which there were an egg in a plate and ten or twelve hard strips of dry bread cut with parsimonious exactitude. Two stools, on one of which the old woman seated herself, showed that the good folks were in the act of supping.

Cornélius went to close two iron shutters, protecting the peepholes, no doubt, through which they had so long been gazing into the street; then he came back to his place. Philippe, as he called himself, now saw the brother and sister take it in turns, with perfect gravity, to dip a strip of bread into the egg, with the same precision as soldiers use in dipping their spoon into the tin pot; but they scarcely coloured them, in order that the egg might last out the full allowance of strips of bread. This was performed in perfect silence.

While he ate, Cornélius studied the sham apprentice with as much care and shrewdness as if he had been made of gold bezants. Philippe, feeling an icy cloak fall on his shoulders, was tempted to look about him; but, with the prudence born of a love-adventure, he took care not to cast even a furtive glance at the walls, for he was well

aware that if Cornélius saw him in the act he would not keep an inquisitive man in the house. So he restricted himself to fixing a modest eye now on the egg, now on the old maid, and anon he contemplated his future master.

Louis' treasurer resembled that monarch; he had even caught some of his tricks, as not unfrequently happens when people live together in intimacy. The Fleming's thick eyebrows almost hid his eyes; but when he raised them a little his glance was bright, penetrating, and full of energy, — the look of men who are used to be silent, and to whom concentration of mind is a familiar habit. His thin lips, finely puckered with upright lines, gave him a keenly subtle expression. The lower part of his face, indeed, vaguely suggested a fox's muzzle; still, a lofty and prominent brow, deeply furrowed, seemed to reveal some great and fine qualities, — a noble soul whose flights had been checked by experience, while the bitter lessons of life had quenched it and thrust it down into the deepest secret places of this strange being. He was certainly no ordinary miser, and his passion no doubt covered intense joys and secret conceptions.

'At what rate are Venetian sequins doing?' he suddenly asked his intending apprentice.

'At three-quarters, at Bruges; at one, at Ghent.'

'What is the freight on the Scheldt?'

'Three sous *Parisis*.'

'Nothing new in Ghent?'

'Liéven d'Herde's brother is ruined.'

'Indeed!'

After allowing this exclamation to escape him, the old man covered his knees with the skirt of his dalmatic, a sort of robe of black velvet open in front, with wide sleeves and no collar. The magnificent material was shiny with wear. This relic of the handsome dress he had been wont to wear as president of the tribunal of *Parchons* — a position

which had brought upon him the Duke of Burgundy's enmity — was no more than a rag.

Philippe was not cold; he was bathed in sweat, trembling lest he should be required to answer any further questions. So far the brief information he had extracted the day before from a Jew, whose life he had once saved, had proved sufficient, thanks to his good memory, and to the Jew's thorough knowledge of the money-lender's manners and habits. But the young gentleman who, in the first flush of enterprise, had been full of confidence, now began to perceive the many difficulties of the business. The terrible Fleming's solemn gravity and perfect coolness were telling on him. And besides, he felt himself under lock and key, and could picture all the Provost's cords at Maître Cornélius' command.

'Have you supped?' said the miser, in a tone which plainly meant 'Do not sup.'

In spite of her brother's tone, the old woman was startled; she looked at their young inmate as if to gauge the capacity of the stomach she would be expected to fill, and then said with a false smile: —

'You have not got your name for nothing, for your hair and moustache are blacker than the devil's tail.'

'I have supped,' replied he.

'Very well,' said the miser; 'then come to see me again to-morrow. I have long been accustomed to dispense with the services of an apprentice. Besides, the night brings good counsel.'

'Nay, by Saint-Bavon! Monsieur, I am from Flanders. I know nobody here, the chains are up. I shall be cast into prison. However,' he added, frightened at the eagerness with which he had spoken, 'of course, if it suits your convenience, I will go.'

The oath had a strange effect on the old Fleming.

'Well, well. By Saint-Bavon! you shall sleep here.'

'But ——' his sister began in dismay.

'Silence,' said Cornélius. 'Oosterlinck, in his letter,

answers for this youth. Have we not a hundred thousand livres in hand belonging to Oosterlinck?' he whispered in her ear; 'and is not that good security?'

'And supposing he were to steal the Bavarian jewels? He looks far more like a thief than a Fleming.'

'Hark!' exclaimed the old man, listening.

The two misers listened. Vaguely, an instant after the hush, a noise of men's steps was heard, far away on the further side of the city moat.

'It is the round of the watch at Le Plessis,' said the sister.

'Come, give me the key of the apprentice's room,' Cornélius went on.

The old maid was about to take up the lamp.

'What, are you going to leave us together without a light?' cried Cornélius, with evident meaning. 'Cannot you move about in the dark at your age? Is it so difficult to find that key?'

The old woman understood the meaning behind these words, and went away.

As he looked after this extraordinary creature, just as she reached the door, Philippe Goulenoire could cast a furtive glance round the room unobserved by his master. It was wainscoted with oak half-way up, and the walls were hung with yellow leather, patterned with black; but what most struck him was a firelock musket with its long spring dagger attached. This new and terrible weapon lay close by Cornélius.

'How do you propose to earn your living?' asked the usurer.

'I have but little money,' replied Goulenoire, 'but I know some good trade recipes. If you will give me no more than a sou on every mark I earn for you, I shall be content.'

'A sou! a sou!' cried the miser; 'but that is a great deal.'

Hereupon the old hag came in again.

'Come,' said Cornélius to Philippe.

They went out into the entrance, and mounted a newel stair that ran up a turret close by the side of the living-room. On the first floor the young man paused.

'Nay, nay,' said Cornélius. 'The devil! why, these are the premises where the King takes his pleasure.'

The architect had constructed the lodging for the apprentice under the conical roof of the staircase tower. It was a small circular room, with stone walls, cold and devoid of ornament. This tower stood in the middle of the front to the court-yard, which, as usual in provincial towns, was narrow and dark. Beyond and through the iron gratings of an arcade, there was a meagre garden, or rather a mulberry orchard, tended no doubt by Cornélius himself.

All this the youth could see through the loopholes in the turret, by the light of the moon, which happily shone brightly. A truckle-bed, a stool, a stone pitcher, and a rickety chest formed the furniture of this cage. The light was admitted through tiny square slits at regular intervals below the outer cornice of the structure, forming its ornamentation, no doubt, in character with this pleasing style of architecture.

'Here is your room. It is simple and strong. There is everything needed for sleep. Good-night. Do not leave it as the others did.'

After giving his new apprentice a parting glance fraught with many meanings, Cornélius locked and double-locked the door, and carried away the key. He went down-stairs again, leaving his man as much at his wit's end as a bell-founder who finds his mould empty. Alone, without a light, sitting on a stool in this little garret, which his four precursors had quitted only for the gallows, the young fellow felt like a wild animal caught in a sack. He sprang on to the stool, and stood on tiptoe to look out of the little loopholes through which the white light came in. He could thence see the Loire, the beautiful hills of Saint-Cyr, and

the gloomy splendour of Le Plessis, where a few lights twinkled from the deep-set windows. Further away lay the fair fields of Touraine and the silvery reaches of the great river. Every detail of the pleasing landscape had at this moment an unwonted charm. Window-panes, water-pools, the roofs of the houses, glittered like gems in the tremulous moonbeams.

The young man could not altogether suppress some sweet but painful feeling.

'If it should be for the last time,' thought he.

And he stood there, already tasting the terrible emotion his adventure had promised, and abandoning himself to the fears of a prisoner who still has a gleam of hope. Every difficulty added to his mistress' beauty. She was to him no longer a woman, but a supernatural being, seen through the hot vapours of desire.

A faint cry, which he fancied proceeded from the Hôtel de Poitiers, brought him to himself and to a sense of his situation. As he sat down on the bed to meditate on the matter, he heard a soft rustle on the winding stair. He listened with all his ears; and presently the words, 'He is in bed,' spoken by the old woman, reached his ear.

By an accident of which the architect was unaware, the least sound below was echoed in the turret room, so that the sham apprentice did not lose one of the movements of the miser and his sister, who were spying on him. He undressed, got into bed, and pretended to sleep, spending the time during which his two hosts remained on the watch on the turret steps, in devising the means for getting out of his prison and into the Hôtel de Poitiers. By about ten o'clock Cornélius and his sister, convinced that their apprentice was asleep, went to their own rooms.

The young man listened keenly to the dull remote sounds made by the Flemings, and fancied he could guess where they slept; they must, he thought, occupy the whole of the second floor.

As in all houses of that date, that floor was in the roof, with dormer windows richly ornamented with carved stone pediments. The roof was also edged by a sort of parapet, concealing the gutters for conducting the rain-water to the spouts, mimicking crocodiles' heads, which shed it into the street. The youth, who had studied his bearings as cunningly as a cat could have done, expected to find a means of getting from the tower on to the roof, and climbing along the gutter as far as Madame de Saint-Vallier's window, by the help of the waterspouts; but he had not known that the windows of the turret would be so small that it was impossible to pass through them. So he resolved to get out on the roof by the window that lighted the second-floor landing of the turret stair.

To execute this bold scheme, he must get out of his room, and Cornélius had the key. The young gentleman had taken the precaution of arming himself with one of the daggers, which were at that time in use for dealing the death-blow, the *coup de grace*, in single combat, when the adversary prayed that it might end. This horrible weapon had one edge as sharp as a razor, and the other toothed like a saw, with the teeth turned in a contrary sense to the thrust as it entered the body. The youth now proposed to use this dagger as a saw to cut the lock out from the wooden door. Happily for him, the staple proved to be attached to the inner side of the lintel by four large screws. By the help of his poniard he succeeded, not without difficulty, in unscrewing the staple which kept him a prisoner, and he carefully laid the screws on the chest.

By midnight he was free, and crept down-stairs without his shoes, to reconnoitre the ground. He was not a little surprised to find an open door to a passage leading to several rooms, and he saw at the end of it a window opening on to the V-shaped space between the roofs of the Hôtel de Poitiers and that of the Malemaison, which met here. Nothing could express his joy, unless it were the vow he

forthwith made to the Holy Virgin to found a mass in her honour, at the famous parish church of Escrignoles. After studying from thence the tall and vast chimneys of the Hôtel de Poitiers, he went back again to fetch his weapon; but he now saw with a terrified shudder that there was a bright light on the stairs, and perceived Cornélius in his old dalmatic, carrying his lamp, his eyes wide open and fixed on the corridor, while he stood like a spectre at the entrance.

'If I open the window and leap out on the roof, he will hear me,' thought the young man.

But the terrible Fleming was coming on — coming as the hour of death steals on the criminal. In this extremity, Goulenoire, his wits quickened by love, recovered his presence of mind; he shrank into the recess of a door, squeezing himself into the corner, and waited for the usurer to pass him. As soon as Cornélius, holding his lamp before him, was just at the angle where the youth could make a draught by blowing, he puffed out the light.

Cornélius muttered a Dutch oath and some incoherent words; but he turned back. The gentleman then flew up to his room, seized his weapon, ran back to the thrice-blessed window, opened it cautiously, and sprang out on to the roof.

Once free and under the sky, he almost fainted with joy. The excitement of danger or the audacity of his enterprise perhaps caused his agitation; victory is often as full of risk as the battle. He leaned against a parapet, trembling with satisfaction, and asked himself: —

'Now, by which of those chimneys can I get into her room?'

He looked at them all. With the instinct of a lover, he touched them by turns to feel in which there had been a fire. When he had made up his mind, the gallant youth fixed his dagger firmly in the joint between two stones, attached his rope-ladder, and threw it down the chimney; and then, without a qualm, trusting to his good blade, climbed down to his mistress. He knew not whether the



Comte de Saint-Vallier were asleep or awake, but he was fully bent on clasping the Countess in his arms even if it should cost two men their life. He gently set foot on the still warm ashes; he yet more gently stooped down and saw the Countess seated in an arm-chair.

By the light of the lamp, pale and trembling with joy, the timid woman pointed to Saint-Vallier in bed, a few yards off. You may suppose that their burning and silent kiss found no echo but in their hearts.

By nine next morning, just as Louis XI was coming out of chapel, after attending mass, he found Maître Cornélius in his path.

'Good luck, Gossip,' said he, curtly, as he pulled his cap straight.

'Sire, I will gladly pay a thousand gold crowns for a moment's speech of your Majesty, seeing that I have discovered the thief who stole the ruby chain and all the jewels.'

'Let us hear this,' said Louis XI, coming out into the court-yard of Le Plessis, followed by his treasurer, by Coyctier his physician, by Olivier le Daim, and the captain of the Scottish Guard. 'Tell me your business. We are to have another man hanged for you, then? Here, Tristan!'

The Provost Marshal, who was marching up and down the court-yard, came up slowly, like a dog proud of his fidelity. The group paused under a tree. The King sat down on a bench; the courtiers formed a circle round him.

'Sire, I have been fairly trapped by a pretended Fleming,' said Cornélius.

'He must be a wily knave indeed, then,' said the King, shaking his head.

'Aye, truly,' replied the goldsmith. 'But I am not sure that he might not have beguiled you even. How was I to suspect a poor wight recommended to me by Oosterlinck,

a man for whom I hold a hundred thousand livres? Nay, but I will wager that the Jew's seal is a forgery. In short, Sire, this morning I found myself robbed of the jewels you admired for their beauty. They have been stolen from me, Sire! The Elector of Bavaria's jewels stolen! The villains respect no man. They would rob you of your kingdom if you were not on the alert. Forthwith I went up to the room where I had bestowed this apprentice, who is certainly a past master of thieving. This time proofs are not lacking. He had unscrewed the staple of the lock; but on his return, the moon having set, he could not lay hands on all the screws. Thus, by good hap, as I went in, I trod on a screw. He was asleep, the varlet, for he was tired out. Fancy this, gentlemen; he had descended into my room by the chimney. To-morrow, or rather this evening, I will have it hot for him. We always learn something from these villains. He had about him a silken ladder, and his clothes bear the traces of his travelling over the roofs and through the chimney. He thought to live with me and bring me to ruin, the bold varlet! Now, where has he buried the jewels? The country-folk saw him early in the morning coming back across the roofs. He had accomplices waiting for him on the dyke you made. Ah, my lord, you are yourself the accomplice of thieves who come in boats; and, snap! they carry away what they will, and no traces left! However, we have the leader, a daring scapegrace, a rascal who would do credit to a gentleman's mother. Aye, he will look well hanging on a gibbet, and with a screw of the torture-chamber he will confess all. And is not this a matter for the honour of your rule? There should be no robbers under so great a King!'

But the King had long since ceased to listen. He was sunk in one of the gloomy moods that became frequent with him during the later years of his life. Silence reigned.

'This is your business, man,' said he, at length, to Tristan. 'Go and search out this matter.'

He rose, and went forward a few steps; his courtiers left him to himself. He then perceived Cornélius, who, mounted on his mule, was going off in company with the Provost.

'And the thousand crowns?' said the King.

'Nay, Sire, you are too great a King! No sum of money could pay for your justice ——'

Louis XI smiled. The courtiers envied the old Fleming his bold tongue and many privileges; he rode off at a good pace, down the avenue of mulberry-trees that led from Le Plessis to Tours.

Exhausted by fatigue, the young gentleman was, in fact, sleeping soundly. On his return from his adventure of gallantry, he had ceased to feel such spirit and ardour for defending himself against distant and perhaps imaginary dangers, as had inspired him to rush on perilous delights. So he had postponed till morning the task of cleaning his soiled raiment and effacing the traces of his success. It was a great blunder, but one towards which everything tended. When, in the absence of the moon, which had set while he was happy with his love, he failed to find all the screws of the vexatious staple, he lost patience. Then, with the happy recklessness of a man full of contentment, or longing for rest, he trusted to the good luck of his fate, which had so far served him so well. He did, indeed, make a sort of bargain with himself, in virtue of which he was to wake at daybreak; but the events of the day and the excitements of the night hindered him from keeping the promise. Happiness is oblivious. The goldsmith seemed less formidable to the young gentleman as he lay on the hard truckle-bed whence so many of his predecessors had risen only to go to execution, and this recklessness was his undoing.

While the King's treasurer was on his way back from

Plessis-lez-Tours, escorted by the Provost and his terrible bowmen, the self-styled Goulenoire was being watched by the old sister, who sat knitting stockings for Cornélius on one of the steps of the turret stair, never heeding the cold.

The youth, meanwhile, was prolonging the joys of that enchanting night, ignorant of the disaster which was coming down on him at a gallop. He was dreaming. His dreams, like all the visions of youth, were so vividly coloured that he was unconscious of where illusion began and reality ended. He saw himself on a cushion at the lady's feet; his head on her knees warm with affection; he was listening to the tale of the persecutions and petty tyranny the Count had so long inflicted on his wife; he wept with the Countess, who was, in fact, of all his natural children the daughter Louis XI loved best; he promised her that he would go on the morrow and reveal all the facts to that terrible father. They had settled everything to their mind, annulling the marriage and imprisoning the husband, while they themselves might at any moment be the victims of his sword if the least sound had roused him. But in his dream the light of the lamp, the flame in their eyes, the hues of stuffs and tapestries, were brighter than in fact; a richer perfume exhaled from their night garments; there was more love in the air, more glow in the atmosphere, than there had been in reality. And the Marie of his dream was far less obdurate than the living Marie had been, to the languishing looks, the insinuating prayers, the magical questioning, the expressive silence, the voluptuous solicitation, the affected generosity which make the first moments of passion so fiercely ardent, and rouse lovers' souls to increased intoxication at each step in their love.

In accordance with the jurisprudence of love in those days Marie de Saint-Vallier granted her adorer the superficial privileges of *la petite oie;* that is to say, she willingly allowed him to kiss her feet, her robe, her hands, and her

throat; she confessed her love; she accepted her lover's attentions and vows; she would permit him to die for her; she allowed herself to encourage an intoxication to which this half reserve, severe and often cruel as it was, gave added heat; but she was herself immovable, and would promise the highest reward of love only as the price of her deliverance. To annul a marriage in those days recourse to Rome was necessary. The parties needed the devotion of a few cardinals, and had to appear in the presence of the Sovereign Pontiff armed with the King's protection. Marie wished to owe her liberty to love, that she might resign it into love's hands.

In those days almost every woman had power enough so to establish her empire in the heart of a man as to make his passion the history of his whole life, the mainspring of the highest resolve. But then ladies could be numbered in France; they were so many sovereigns; they had a noble pride; their lovers belonged to them rather than they to the men; their love often cost much bloodshed, and to be accepted by them dangers had to be faced.

But in his dream Marie was merciful, and deeply touched by the devotion of her beloved, and she made little resistance to the handsome youth's vehement passion. Which was the real Marie? Did the so-called apprentice see the true woman in his dream? Was the lady he had found in the Hôtel de Poitiers merely wearing a mask of virtue? The question is a delicate one, and the honour of the ladies requires that it should remain undecided.

At the very moment when the dream-Marie was about perhaps to forego her high dignity as his mistress, the lover felt himself gripped by an iron hand, and the sharp tones of the Provost thus addressed him: —

'Come, you midnight Christian, who go feeling about for heaven. Come, wake up!'

Philippe saw Tristan's swarthy face and recognised his sardonic smile; and then on the steps of the spiral stairs he

saw Cornélius and his sister, and behind them the Provost's men-at-arms. At this sight, at the aspect of all those diabolical countenances expressing hatred or else the vile curiosity of men accustomed to the hangman's office, Philippe Goulenoire sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

''Sdeath!' cried he, snatching his dagger from under his pillow. 'It is time to be trying knife-play!'

'Oh, ho!' cried Tristan. 'I smell the gentleman! It strikes me that we have here Georges d'Estouteville, nephew to the grand captain of the crossbowmen.'

On hearing his true name proclaimed by Tristan, young d'Estouteville thought less of himself than of the danger his unhappy mistress would be in if he were recognised. To divert suspicion, he exclaimed:—

'By all the devils, help! All good vagabonds, help!'

After this terrible outcry, uttered by a man who was absolutely desperate, the young courtier with one tremendous bound, poniard in hand, rushed out to the stairs. But the Provost's followers were used to such adventures. As soon as Georges d'Estouteville had reached the steps, they dexterously captured him, undaunted by the vigorous thrust he made at one of them, which fortunately slipped on the man's breastplate. They disarmed him, tied his hands, and threw him back on his bed under the eyes of their chief, who stood thoughtful and immovable.

Tristan silently examined the prisoner's hands, and scratching his chin he pointed them out to Cornélius, saying:—

'Those are no more the hands of a robber than those of an apprentice. He is of noble birth.'

'Say rather of ignoble earth,' cried the Fleming, dolefully. 'My good Tristan, whether he be noble or baseborn, the villain has undone me. I would I might see him at this moment with his hands and feet toasting, or fitted into your neat little boots. He is beyond a doubt the captain of the invisible legion of devils who know all

my secrets, open all my locks, rob me, and kill me by inches. They are rich by now, my friend. Ah! But this time we will have their treasure, for this fellow looks like the King of Egypt. I shall get back my precious rubies and vast sums of money; our good King shall have his hands full of crowns.'

'Oh, our hiding-places are safer than yours!' said Georges, smiling.

'Ah, the damned villain, he confesses!' exclaimed the miser.

The Provost Marshal, meanwhile, had been examining the prisoner's clothes and the lock.

'Was it you who unscrewed all those rivets?'

Georges made no reply.

'Oh, very well; hold your tongue if you like. You will confess presently to Saint Rack-bones,' said Tristan.

'Ah, now you talk sense!' cried Cornélius.

'Lead him away,' said the Provost.

Georges d'Estouteville asked permission to dress. At a sign from their master, the men-at-arms dressed the prisoner with the dexterous rapidity of a nurse who takes advantage of a moment when her baby is quiet, to change its clothes.

A great crowd had collected in the Rue du Mûrier. Their murmurs grew louder every moment, and seemed to threaten a riot. Rumours of the theft had been rife in the town from an early hour. Popular sympathy was in favour of the apprentice, who was said to be young and good-looking, and there was a general revival of hatred against Cornélius; so there was never a good mother's son, nor a young woman blest with neat feet and a rosy face, who was not eager to see the victim. There was a fearful uproar as soon as Georges appeared in the street, led by one of the Provost's men who, though mounted on a horse, held the strong leather thong by which the pris-

oner was secured, twisted round his arm, while the young man's hands were tightly tied. Whether it was merely to see Philippe Goulenoire, or in the hope of a rescue, those behind pushed those in front close up to the guard of cavalry posted outside the Malemaison. At this instant Cornélius and his sister slammed the door and closed the shutters with the vehemence of panic terror. Tristan, who was not accustomed to respect the populace, saw that the mob was not yet master, and cared not a straw for any riot.

'Push on, push on!' said he to his men.

At their master's word the bowmen urged their horses towards the end of the street. And then, seeing two or three inquisitive mortals fallen under the horses' feet, and some others crushed against the walls where they were being stifled, the crowd that had collected took the wiser part and went home again.

'Make way for the King's justice!' cried Tristan. 'What business have you here? Do you want to be hanged, too? Go home, good folks; your roast meat is burning! Now then, goodwife, your husband's hose need mending; go back to your needle.'

Although these facetious remarks showed that the Provost was in high good humour, the most daring fled from him as if he were the Black Death. Just as the crowd began to give way, Georges d'Estouteville was startled to see, at one of the windows of the Hôtel de Poitiers, his beloved Marie de Saint-Vallier, laughing with the Count. She was laughing at him, the unhappy, devoted lover, who was going to death for her sake. Nay, perhaps she only was amused by those in the crowd whose caps had been knocked off by the archers' accoutrements.

A man must be three and twenty and rich indeed in illusions, must dare to trust in a woman's love, must love with all the powers of his being, and, after risking his life with joy on the faith of a kiss, must feel himself betrayed,

ere he can understand the rage, hatred, and despair that surged up in the young man's soul as he saw his mistress laughing and vouchsafing him only a cold and indifferent glance. She had, no doubt, been there some time, for her arms rested on a cushion. She was evidently quite comfortable, and her old ogre quite content. He was laughing, too, — curse him for a hunchback!

A tear or two trickled from the young man's eyes; but when Marie saw them, she hastily drew back. And suddenly Georges' eyes were dry, for he descried the red and black feathers of the page who was devoted to him.

The Count did not observe the movements of that cautious servant, who came in on tiptoe. The page spoke a word in his mistress' ear, and then Marie came back to the window. She contrived to evade the watchful eye of her tyrant long enough to flash a look at her lover — the look of a woman who has skilfully deceived her Argus — bright with the fires of love and the triumph of hope.

'I am watching over you.' If she had shouted the words, it could not have expressed so many things as this glance, embodying a thousand thoughts, and charged with the alarms, the joys, the perils, of their situation. It bore him from heaven to martyrdom, and from martyrdom to heaven. And so the young man, light-hearted and content, marched on to execution, counting the anguish of the torture-chamber as a small price for the raptures of love.

As Tristan was turning out of the Rue du Mûrier, his men drew up at the presence of an officer of the Scottish Guard, who rode up at full tilt.

'What is to do?' asked the Provost.

'Nothing that concerns you,' replied the officer, scornfully. 'The King has sent me to summon the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, whom he bids to dine at his table.'

Hardly had the Provost reached the quay of Le Plessis

when the Count and his wife, both riding, she on a white mule and he on his horse, and followed by two pages, came up with the bowmen to enter the precincts of the château in their company. The whole party went but slowly. Georges was on foot, between two men-at-arms, one of whom still led him by the thong.

Tristan, the Count, and his wife naturally led the van, and the criminal came behind. The younger page, mingling with the bowmen, was questioning them, or from time to time addressing the prisoner; and he cleverly seized an opportunity to say in an undertone: —

'I climbed over the garden wall of Le Plessis, and carried a letter that Madame had written to the King. She thought she would have died when she heard that you were accused of theft. Be of good courage; she will speak for you.'

Love had already lent the Countess courage and craft. When she had laughed, her attitude and mirth were due to the heroism women can display in the great crises of life.

Notwithstanding the singular caprice which led the author of *Quentin Durward* to place the château of Plessis-lez-Tours on a height, we are compelled to leave it where it really stood at that time, in a hollow, protected on two sides by the Cher and the Loire, and again by the canal, named by Louis XI the Canal Sainte-Anne in honour of his favourite daughter, Madame de Beaujeu. By uniting the two rivers between Tours and Le Plessis, this canal was at once a formidable protection to the stronghold and a valuable highway for trade. On the side next to the broad and fertile plain of Bréhémont, the park was enclosed behind a moat, of which the enormous width and depth are sufficiently shown by what remains.

Thus, at a period when the power of artillery was in its infancy, the position of Le Plessis, long since chosen by Louis XI as his favourite retreat, might be regarded as impregnable. The château itself was built of brick and

stone, and not in any way remarkable, but it was surrounded by fine groves, and from its windows, through the alleys of the park (*Plexitium*), the loveliest views possible could be seen. And no rival mansion was to be found anywhere near this lovely palace standing exactly in the middle of the little plain enclosed for the King within four effectual bulwarks of water. If tradition may be trusted, Louis XI occupied the western wing, and he could from his room see at once the course of the Loire, and beyond the river the pretty valley watered by the Choisille, and part of the hills of Saint-Cyr; from the windows overlooking the court-yard he commanded the entrance to his fortress, and the quay by which his favourite residence was connected with the city of Tours. The King's suspicious temper gives weight to this tradition. And certainly, if Louis XI had but lavished in the building of this palace such architectural magnificence as François I afterwards indulged at Chambord, the home of the kings of France would have been permanently fixed in Touraine. This beautiful spot, and its lovely scenery, have only to be seen to prove its superiority over the situation of any other royal residence.

Louis XI, now in his fifty-seventh year, had scarcely three more years to live, and was already made aware of the approach of death by attacks of illness. Delivered now from his enemies, and on the eve of adding to the kingdom of France all the possessions of the duchy of Burgundy, by means of a marriage, arranged by Desquerdes, the captain-general of his army in Flanders, between the Dauphin and Marguerite, sole heiress of Burgundy; having secured his authority in every part of his realm, while still planning wise improvements, he saw time slipping from his grasp, nothing left to him but the troubles of advancing years. Deceived by everybody, even by his creatures, experience had increased his natural distrustfulness. The desire to live had become in him the egoism of a king who had

made himself one incarnate with his people, and who craved for long life to carry out vast schemes.

Everything that the good sense of public-spirited statesmen or the instinct of revolution has since achieved in reforming the monarchy, Louis XI had thought out. Equality of taxation, and that of all subjects in the eye of the Law — the Sovereign was the Law then — were objects he boldly strove for. On the day before All Saints he had assembled certain learned goldsmiths to establish uniform weights and measures throughout France, as he had already established uniform authority. Thus his great mind soared eagle-like above the whole kingdom, and Louis XI added to the cautiousness of a king the eccentricities that are natural to men of lofty genius.

So grand a figure would at no period have appeared more poetical or more dignified. A strange mixture of contrasts! A great will in a feeble frame; a mind incredulous as to earthly things, credulous as concerned religious practices; a man combating two forces greater than himself — the present and the future: the future, when he dreaded to endure torment, which made him sacrifice so largely to the Church; the present, his actual life, for whose sake he was a slave to Coyctier. This King, who could crush whom he would, was crushed by remorse, and yet more by sickness, in the midst of all the mysterious prestige that enwraps a suspicious king, in whom all power centres.

It was the stupendous and always impressive struggle of man in the fullest expression of his power, rebelling against nature.

While waiting till the dinner hour, at that time between eleven o'clock and noon, Louis XI, after a short walk, was sitting in a large tapestried arm-chair in the chimney-corner of his own room. Olivier le Daim and Coyctier, the leech, looked at each other without a word, standing in a window-bay, and respecting their master's slumbers. The

only sound to be heard was that made in the anteroom by the two chamberlains-in-waiting, as they paced to and fro: the Sire de Montrésor and Jean Dufou, Sire de Montbazon. These two, gentlemen of the Touraine, kept an eye on the captain of the Scottish Guard, who was probably asleep in his chair, as was his custom.

The King seemed to be dozing; his head was sunk on his breast; his cap, pulled over his brow, almost concealed his eyes. Thus huddled in his raised throne, which was surmounted by a crown, he looked like a man who had fallen asleep in the midst of some deep calculation.

At this moment Tristan and his party were crossing the bridge of Sainte-Anne over the canal, at about two hundred paces from the entrance to the château.

'Who goes there?' asked the King.

The courtiers looked inquiringly at each other in surprise.

'He is dreaming,' whispered Coyctier.

'*Pasques Dieu!*' cried the King. 'Do you take me for a fool? Somebody is coming across the bridge. To be sure, I am sitting by the chimney, and of course can hear the sound more clearly than you can. That natural effect might be utilised ——'

'What a man!' said Olivier le Daim.

Louis XI rose and went to the window, whence he could look out on the town; then he saw the High Provost, and exclaimed: —

'Ah ha! Here is my old gossip with his thief. And there, too, comes my little Marie de Saint-Vallier. I had forgotten that little matter. Olivier,' he went on, addressing the barber, 'go and tell Monsieur de Montbazon to put us some fine Burgundy on the table; and see that the cook gives us lampreys. Madame la Comtesse dearly likes them both. May I eat lampreys?' he added after a pause, with an uneasy look at Coyctier.

His attendant's only reply was to examine his master's face. The two men made a picture.

History and romance have consecrated the brown camlet overcoat, and trunks of the same material worn by Louis XI. His cap, garnished with pewter medals, and his collar of the Order of Saint-Michael, are no less famous; but no writer, no painter, has ever shown us the terrible King's face in his later days: a sickly face, hollow, yellow, and tawny, every feature expressive of bitter cunning and icy irony. There was, indeed, a noble brow to this mask, a brow furrowed with lines and seamed with lofty thought, but on his cheeks and lips a singularly vulgar and common stamp. Certain details of that countenance would have led to the conclusion that it belonged to some debauched old vine-grower, some miserly tradesman; but then, through these vague suggestions and the decrepitude of a dying old man, the King flashed out, the man of power and action. His eyes, pale and yellow, looked extinct; but a spark lurked within of courage and wrath, which at the least touch would flame up into consuming fires.

The physician was a sturdy citizen, dressed in black, with a florid, keen, and greedy face, giving himself airs of importance.

The setting of these two figures was a room panelled with walnut wood, and hung with fine Flemish tapestry above the wainscot; the ceiling, supported on carved beams, was already blackened by smoke. The furniture and bedstead, inlaid with arabesques in white metal, would seem more valuable now than they really were at that time, when the arts were beginning to produce so many masterpieces.

'Lamprey is very bad for you,' replied the physician.[1]

'What am I to eat, then?' the King humbly asked.

'Some widgeon, with salt. Otherwise you are so full of bile that you might die on All Souls' day.'

[1] *Le physicien:* this word then lately substituted for *maître myrrhe* (or leech) has been retained in English. It was generally used in France at that time. — *Balzac.*

'To-day?' cried the King, in great alarm.

'Oh, be easy, Sire, I am here,' replied Coyctier. 'Try not to fret, and amuse yourself a little.'

'Ah,' said the King, 'my daughter used to be skilled in that difficult art.'

Just then Imbert de Bastarnay, Sire de Montrésor and de Bridoré, gently knocked at the royal door. By the King's leave he came in, announcing the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. Louis nodded. Marie entered the room, followed by her old husband, who allowed her to precede him.

'Good day, my children,' said the King.

'Sire,' said the lady in a whisper, as she embraced him, 'I would fain speak with you in private.'

Louis XI made as though he had not heard her.

'Dufou, Nola!' cried he, in a hollow voice.

Dufou, Lord of Montbazon and high cupbearer of France, hastened in.

'Go to the steward; I must have a widgeon for dinner. Then go to Madame de Beaujeu and tell her that I dine alone to-day. Do you know, Madame,' the King went on, affecting some little anger, 'that you neglect me? It is nearly three years since I saw you last. Come, come hither, pretty one,' he added, sitting down and holding out his arms to her. 'How thin you are! What do you do to make her so thin? Heh?' he suddenly asked, turning to the Count.

The jealous wretch gave his wife such a pathetic look that she was almost sorry for him.

'It is happiness, Sire,' he replied.

'Oh, ho! You are too fond of each other,' said the King, holding his daughter upright on his knees. 'Well, well, I see I was right, then, when I called you Marie-pleine-de-Grace. Coyctier, leave us! Now, what do you want of me?' he added, to his daughter, as the leech disappeared. 'When you sent me your ——'

In such peril Marie audaciously laid her hand on the King's mouth, and said in his ear: —

'I always thought you secret and keen-witted ——'

'Saint-Vallier,' said the King, laughing, 'I believe that Bridoré has something to say to you.'

The Count left the room; but he shrugged one shoulder in a way his wife knew only too well; she could guess the jealous monster's thoughts, and concluded that she must be on her guard against his malignancy.

'Now tell me, child, how do you think I am looking? Am I much altered?'

'Gramercy, my lord, do you want the truth? Or shall I speak you fair?'

'No,' said he, in a husky voice, 'I want to know where I stand.'

'In that case, you look but ill to-day. But I trust my truthfulness may not mar the success of my business.'

'What is it?' asked the King, passing one of his hands over his knitted brows.

'Well, Sire,' said she, 'the young man who has been arrested in the house of your treasurer Cornélius, and who is at this present in the hands of your Provost Marshal, is innocent of stealing the jewels of Bavaria.'

'How do you know?' asked the King.

Marie hung her head, and blushed.

'I need not ask if there is a love-affair at the bottom of this,' said Louis XI, gently raising his daughter's face, and stroking her chin. 'If you do not confess every morning, child, you will go to hell.'

'And cannot you oblige me without violating my secret thoughts?'

'What would be the pleasure of that?' exclaimed the King, seeing that there might be some amusement in the matter.

'Oh, but you would not wish your pleasure to cost me sorrow?'

'Heh! sly puss, do not you trust me?'

'Well, then, my lord, set this young gentleman free.'

'Oh, ho! So he is a gentleman!' cried the King. 'Then he is not an apprentice?'

'He is most certainly innocent,' said she.

'I do not see it in that light,' said the King, coldly. 'I am the supreme judge in my kingdom, and it is my duty to punish malefactors.'

'Nay, come, do not put on your considering face. Grant me the young man's life.'

'Would not that be giving you back what is your own?'

'Sire,' said she, 'I am honest and virtuous. You are mocking me.'

'Well, then,' said the King, 'as I cannot see my way in this business, let Tristan throw some light upon it.'

Marie de Sassenage turned pale. With a violent effort she said:—

'Sire, I assure you that you will be in despair if you do. The so-called thief has stolen nothing. If you will promise me his pardon, I will tell you everything, even if you should visit it on me.'

'Oh, ho! This looks serious,' said Louis XI, setting his cap aside. 'Speak, my child.'

'Well,' said she in a low voice, and speaking with her lips close to her father's ear, 'the gentleman spent the night in my room.'

'He may have gone to see you, and yet have robbed Cornélius — a double larceny.'

'Sire, I have your blood in my veins, and I am not the woman to love a vagabond. This gentleman is the nephew of the captain-general of your crossbowmen.'

'Go on,' said the King. 'It is very hard to get anything out of you.'

As he spoke, Louis flung his daughter off to some distance; and she stood trembling while he ran to the door into the next room, but on tiptoe, and without making a

sound. A moment since the light from a window in the outer room, shining beneath the door, had shown him the shadow of a pair of feet close to the entrance. He suddenly opened the iron-bound door, and surprised the Comte de Saint-Vallier, who was listening.

'*Pasques Dieu!*' cried he, 'this is such insolence as deserves the axe.'

'My liege,' said Saint-Vallier, boldly, 'I would rather have the axe at my neck than the ornament of the married on my forehead.'

'You may live to have both,' said the King. 'Not a man of you all is secure against those two misfortunes, my lords. Go into the further anteroom. Conyngham,' he went on, addressing the Scottish captain, 'were you asleep? And where is Monsieur Bridoré? Do you allow me to be thus invaded? *Pasques Dieu!* the plainest citizen in Tours is better served than I am.'

Having thus vented his anger, Louis came back into his room; but he took care to draw the tapestry curtains which covered the door on the inner side, less for the purpose of moderating the cold draught than of smothering the King's words.

'And so, daughter,' said he, amusing himself with teasing her, as a cat plays with a mouse it has caught, 'Georges d'Estouteville was your gallant yesterday?'

'Oh, no, Sire!'

'No? Then by Saint-Carpion! he deserves to die. The villain did not think my daughter fair enough perhaps.'

'Oh, if that is all,' said she, 'I assure you he kissed my feet and hands with such ardour as might have melted the most virtuous wife. He loves me, but honestly, as a gentleman should.'

'And do you take me for Saint-Louis that you foist such a tale on me? A youngster of that pattern would have risked his life to kiss your slippers or your sleeve! Nay, nay ——'

'Aye, my lord, but it is true. Still he came for another reason.'

As she spoke, it struck Marie that she had imperilled her husband's life, for Louis at once eagerly inquired: —

'For what?'

The adventure was amusing him hugely. He certainly did not expect the strange revelations now made by his daughter, after stipulating for her husband's pardon.

'Oh, ho! Monsieur de Saint-Vallier, so this is the way you draw the blood royal!' cried the King, his eyes blazing with wrath.

At this moment the bell of Le Plessis rang to call the King's escort to arms. Leaning on his daughter's arm, Louis XI appeared on the threshold and found his guard in attendance. He first glanced dubiously at the Comte de Saint-Vallier, considering the sentence he was about to pronounce on him.

The deep silence was broken by Tristan's footsteps coming up the grand stairs. He came into the room, and advancing to the King he said: —

'Sire, the matter is settled!'

'What, all over?' said the King.

'Our man is in the priests' hands. He confessed to the theft after a screw of the rack.'

The Countess sighed and turned pale; she could not even command her voice as she looked at the King. This glance was not lost on Saint-Vallier, who said in an undertone: —

'I am undone. The thief is known to my wife!'

'Silence!' cried the King. 'There is some one here of whom I am tired. Go quickly and stop the execution,' he added, turning to the Provost. 'You will answer to me for the criminal; your life for his, my friend! This affair must be thoroughly searched out, and I reserve the judgment. Provisionally, set the prisoner at large. I shall know where to find him; these robbers have hiding-places that they love,

dens where they lurk. Make it known to Cornélius that I purpose going to his house this very evening to conduct the inquiry. Monsieur de Saint-Vallier,' the King went on, fixing his eyes on the Count, 'I have heard of all your doings. All the blood in your body cannot pay for one drop of mine; do you know that? By our Lady of Clery, you have been guilty of high treason. Did I give you so sweet a wife that you might make her pale and haggard? Marry, my lord! You go to your own house at this moment, and make you ready there for a long journey.'

The mere habit of cruelty made the King pause on these words, but he presently added: —

'You will set forth this night to treat of my business with the Signors of Venice. Do not be uneasy; I will bring your wife home with me this evening to my château of Le Plessis; there, at least, she will be safe. Henceforth I shall take better care of her than I have done since you wedded her.'

Marie, as she heard these words, silently pressed her father's arm to thank him for his clemency and good grace. As to Louis, he was laughing in his sleeve.

Louis XI dearly loved to interfere in his subjects' concerns, and was ever ready to mingle in his own royal person in scenes of middle-class life. This fancy, severely blamed by some historians, was no more than the passion for the *incognito* which is one of the chief amusements of princes, a sort of temporary abdication which enables them to bring a breath of work-a-day life into an existence which is insipid for lack of opposition; but then Louis XI played at an *incognito* without any disguise. In this sort of adventures, too, he was always good-humoured, and did his utmost to be pleasant to the citizen class, of whom he had made friends and allies against the feudal lords.

It was now some little time since he had an opportunity of thus making himself popular, or taking up the defence of a man enmeshed in some actionable offence, so he was

ready to enter vehemently into Maître Cornélius's alarms and the Countess's secret griefs.

Several times during dinner he said to his daughter: —

'But who can have robbed my old gossip? He has lost more than twelve hundred thousand crowns' worth of jewels, stolen within the last eight years. Twelve hundred thousand crowns, my lords,' he repeated, looking round on the gentlemen in attendance. 'By our Lady, for such a sum of money a great many absolutions may be bought of the Court of Rome. I could have embanked the Loire for the money, or, better still, have conquered Piedmont — a fine bulwark, ready made, for our kingdom.'

When dinner was ended, Louis XI led away his daughter, his physician, and the Provost Marshal, and made his way with an escort of his guard to the Hôtel de Poitiers, where, as he had expected, he found the Comte de Saint-Vallier, who was awaiting his wife, perhaps to get rid of her.

'Monsieur,' said the King, 'I had instructed you to depart as soon as possible. Take leave of your wife and get across the frontier; you will be granted an escort of honour. As to your instructions and letters of credit, they will be at Venice sooner than you.'

Louis gave his orders, adding certain secret instructions, to a lieutenant of the Scottish Guard, who was to take a company and attend his envoy to Venice. Saint-Vallier went off in great haste, after giving his wife a cold kiss, which he would gladly have rendered fatal.

As soon as the Countess had retired to her room, Louis proceeded to the Malemaison, very anxious to see the end of the dismal farce that was going on under his gossip the usurer's roof, and flattering himself that, being the King, he would have keen wit enough to detect the robbers' secrets.

It was not without apprehension that Cornélius saw his master's company.

'And are all these folks part of the ceremony?' he asked in a low voice. Louis could not help smiling at the terrors of the old miser and his sister.

'No, gossip,' replied he, 'be quite easy. They will sup with us at my house; we shall go into the matter alone. I am such a good justiciary that I wager ten thousand crowns I find the criminal.'

'Let us find him, my lord, and never mind the wager.'

They went into the closet where the Fleming stored his treasures. Here King Louis, having first examined the case which had contained the Elector of Bavaria's jewels, and then the chimney down which the thief was supposed to have come, easily proved to the goldsmith that his suspicions were unfounded, inasmuch as there was no soot on the hearth, — where, indeed, a fire was rarely kindled, — and no trace of any kind in the chimney. Moreover, the chimney opened to a part of the roof that was practically inaccessible. Finally, after two hours spent in investigations characterised by the sagacity which distinguished the King's distrustful temper, it was proved to a demonstration that no one could have got into the miser's treasury. There was no mark of violence on any of the locks, inside or out, nor on the iron coffers containing his gold and silver and the costly jewels pledged by wealthy borrowers.

'If the robber opened this hoard,' said Louis XI, 'why did he take only the Bavarian jewels? Why should he have left this pearl necklace? A strange thief, indeed!'

At this reflection the hapless miser turned pale; the King and he eyed each other for a moment.

'Well, then, my liege, what was the robber doing whom you have taken under your protection, and who certainly was out during the night?'

'If you have not guessed, master, I desire that you never will; it is one of my secrets.'

'Then the devil haunts me!' said the goldsmith, lamentably.

Under any other circumstances the King would have laughed at his treasurer's exclamation; but he stood thinking and gazing at Maître Cornélius with the scrutiny familiar to men of genius and authority, as if he could see into the man's brain. The Fleming, in fact, was terrified, thinking he had offended his formidable master.

'Angel or devil, I will have the malefactor!' the King suddenly exclaimed. 'If you are robbed this night, I will know by whom to-morrow. Call up that old ape, your sister,' he added.

Cornélius almost hesitated to leave the King alone in the room that contained his treasure; however, he went, coerced by the strength of the bitter smile that curled Louis' faded lips. And in spite of his confidence, he soon returned, followed by the old woman.

'Have you any flour?' asked the King.

'To be sure; we have laid in our store for the winter,' said she.

'Well, then, bring it here,' said the King.

'And what would you be doing with our flour, Sire?' cried she in alarm, and not in the least awed by the presence of majesty, like all persons possessed by a ruling passion.

'You old fool, will you do as our gracious liege bids you?' cried Cornélius. 'Does the King want your flour?'

'This is what I buy fine flour for,' muttered she, on the stairs. 'Oh, my good flour!'

She turned back to say to the King: —

'Is it your royal whim, my lord, to examine my flour?'

But at last she returned with one of the linen bags, which from time immemorial have been used in Touraine for carrying provisions to or from market, — walnuts, fruit, or corn. This sack was half full of flour. The housewife opened it, and timidly showed it to the King, looking at him with the swift stolen glances by which old maids, as it would seem, hope to cast venom on a man.

'It is worth six sous the measure,' said she.

'What matter!' replied the King. 'Sprinkle it on the floor, and above all strew it very evenly, as if there had been a light fall of snow.'

The old woman did not understand. The order dismayed her more than the end of the world could have done.

'My flour, my liege — on the floor — why ——'

Maître Cornélius, who had an inkling, though a vague one, of the King's idea, snatched the bag, and sprinkled the flour gently on the boards. The old woman shuddered, and held out her hand for the bag; as soon as her brother restored it to her, she vanished with a deep sigh.

Cornélius took a feather broom and began spreading the flour with it over the floor till it lay like a sheet of snow, walking backwards towards the door, followed by the King, who seemed greatly amused by the proceedings. When they were at the threshold, Louis XI said to his gossip: —

'Are there two keys to the lock?'

'No, Sire.'

The King examined the structure of the door, which was strengthened by large iron plates and bars. All the parts of this armour centred round a lock with a secret, of which Cornélius alone had the key. After investigating it thoroughly, Louis sent for Tristan, and bid him to set a watch with the utmost secrecy that night, some in the mulberry-trees on the quay, and on the parapets of the neighbouring houses; but first to collect all his men to escort him back to Le Plessis, so as to make it appear that he, the King, was not supping with Maître Cornélius. Then he desired the miser to be so particular in closing every window, that not a glimmer of light could pierce through, and to order a light meal, so as not to give a hint that His Majesty was sleeping there that night.

The King set out in state by the dyke road and returned privily, with only two attendants, by the rampart gate to the house of his friend the miser. Everything was so well

arranged that all the townsfolk and courtiers supposed that the King had chosen to go back to the château, and would sup with the treasurer on the morrow. The miser's sister confirmed this notion by buying some green sauce from the best maker, whose shop was close to the *quarroir aux herbes*, since called the carroir de Beaune, in honour of a splendid white marble fountain which the unfortunate Semblançay (Jacques de Beaune) sent for from Italy to adorn the capital of his province.

At about eight in the evening, when the King was at supper with his leech, Cornélius and the captain of the Scottish Guard, talking gayly and forgetting that he was Louis XI and ill, and almost dying, perfect silence reigned outside, and the passers-by, nay, even a thief, might have supposed the dwelling to be uninhabited.

'I hope,' said the King, laughing, 'that my gossip may be robbed this night, to satisfy my curiosity. And see to it, gentlemen, that no one leaves his chamber to-morrow morning without my orders, under pain of serious punishment.'

Thereupon they all went to bed.

Next morning Louis XI was the first to leave his room, and he made his way towards Cornélius's treasure-room. He was not a little surprised to detect the prints of a large foot on the stairs and in the passages of the house. Carefully avoiding these precious marks, he went to the door of the miser's closet and found it locked, with no traces of violence. He examined the direction of the footprints, but as they gradually grew fainter and at last left no mark, it was impossible to discover how the robber had escaped.

'Ah ha! gossip,' cried the King to Cornélius, 'you have been robbed, that is very certain!'

At these words the old Fleming came out, a prey to evident horror. Louis XI led him to look at the footprints on the boards, and while examining them once more, the

King, having by chance observed the miser's slippers, recognised the shape of the sole of which so many copies were stamped on the flooring. He said not a word, and suppressed a laugh, remembering how many innocent men had been hanged.

Cornélius hurried into his strong room. The King, bidding him make a fresh footprint by the side of those already visible, convinced him that the thief was none other than himself.

'The pearl necklace is missing!' cried Cornélius. 'There is witchcraft in this. I have not left my room.'

'We will find out about that at once,' said the King, puzzled by the goldsmith's evident good faith.

He called the men of the watch into his room and asked them: —

'Marry now, what did you see in the night?'

'Ah, Sire! a magical sight!' replied the lieutenant. 'Your Majesty's treasurer stealing down-stairs close to the wall, and so nimbly that at first we took him for a spectre.'

'I!' cried Cornélius, who then stood silent and motionless as a paralysed creature.

'You may go, all of you,' said Louis, addressing the bowmen; 'and tell Monsieur Conyngham, Coyctier, Bridoré, and Tristan that they may get out of bed and come here. You have incurred pain of death,' said Louis, coldly, to the miser, who, happily, did not hear him, 'for you have at least ten on your soul!'

The King laughed, a grim, noiseless laugh, and paused.

'But be easy,' he went on, as he noticed the strange palour that overspread the old man's face; 'you are better to bleed than to kill. And in consideration of a handsome fine, paid into my coffers, you may escape the clutches of justice; but if you do not build at least a chapel to the Virgin, you are in jeopardy of finding warm and anxious work before you for all eternity.'

'Twelve hundred and thirty and eighty-eight thousand crowns make thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns,' replied Cornélius, mechanically, absorbed in calculations. 'Thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns misappropriated!'

'He must have buried them in some hidden spot,' said the King, who was beginning to think the sum a royal prize. 'This is the lodestone that has always attracted him hither — he smelt his gold.'

Hereupon Coyctier came in. Noticing the treasurer's attitude, he watched him keenly while the King was relating the adventure.

'My lord,' replied the physician, 'there is nothing supernatural in the business. Our friend here has the peculiarity of walking in his sleep. This is the third case I have met with of this singular malady. If you should be pleased to witness its effects, you might see this old man walking without danger on the parapet of the roof any night when he should be seized by it. In the two men I have already studied, I discovered a curious connection between the instincts of this nocturnal vitality and their business or occupations by day.'

'Ah, Maître Coyctier, you are indeed most learned!'

'Am I not your physician?' retorted the leech, insolently.

On this reply Louis XI made a little movement which was a familiar trick with him when he had hit on a good idea, — a gesture of hastily pushing his cap up.

'In such cases,' Coyctier went on, 'men transact their business in their sleep. As our friend here is not averse to hoarding, he has quietly yielded to his favourite habit. Indeed, he probably has an attack whenever, during the day, he has been in alarm for his treasure.'

'*Pasques Dieu!* and what a treasure!' cried the King.

'Where is it?' asked Cornélius, who, by a singular peculiarity of our nature, heard all that the King and his

leech were saying, though almost stunned by his reflections and his misfortune.

'Oh!' replied Coyctier, with a coarse, diabolical laugh, 'somnambulists have no recollection of their acts and deeds when they awake.'

'Leave us!' said the King.

When Louis XI was alone with his gossip, he looked at him with a cold chuckle.

'Worshipful Master Hoogworst,' said he, bowing low, 'all treasure-trove in France belongs to the King.'

'Yes, my liege, it is all yours; and our lives and fortunes are in your hands; but hitherto you have been so merciful as to take no more than you found necessary.'

'Listen to me, gossip. If I help you to recover this treasure, you may, in all confidence and without fear, divide it with me.'

'No, Sire, I will not divide it. It shall be all yours, when I am dead. But what scheme have you for finding it?'

'I have only to watch you, myself, while you are taking your nocturnal walks. Any one but myself would be a danger.'

'Ah, Sire,' replied Cornélius, falling at the King's feet, 'you are the only man in the kingdom whom I would trust with that office, and I shall find means to prove my gratitude for your kindness to your humble servant by doing my utmost to promote the marriage of the Heiress of Bourgogne to Monseigneur the Dauphin. There indeed is a treasure, not, to be sure, in crown-pieces, but in land, which will nobly round out your dominions!'

'Pshaw, Fleming, you are deceiving me!' said the King, knitting his brows, 'or you have played me false.'

'Nay, Sire, can you doubt my devotion — you, the only man I love?'

'Words, words!' said the King, turning to face the miser. 'You ought not to have waited for this to be of use to me. You are selling me your patronage — *Pasques*

Dieu! to me — Louis the Eleventh! Are you the master, I would know, and am I the servant?'

'Ah, my liege,' replied the old usurer, 'I had hoped to give you an agreeable surprise by news of the communications I had established with the men of Ghent. I expected confirmation of it by the hand of Oosterlinck's apprentice. But what has become of him?'

'Enough,' said the King. 'Another error. I do not choose that any one should interfere, uncalled for, in my concerns. Enough! I must think all this over.'

Maître Cornélius found the agility of youth to fly to the lower room, where his sister was sitting.

'Oh, Jeanne, dear heart, we have somewhere a hoard where I have hidden the thirteen hundred thousand crowns. And I — I am the thief!'

Jeanne Hoogworst rose from her stool, starting to her feet as if the seat were of red-hot iron. The shock was so frightful to an old woman accustomed for many years to exhaust herself by voluntary abstinence, that she quaked in every limb and felt a terrible pain in her back. By degrees her colour faded, and her face, in which the wrinkles made any change very difficult to detect, gradually fell, while her brother explained to her the disease to which he was a victim, and the strange situation in which they both stood.

'King Louis and I,' said he in conclusion, 'have just been telling each other as many lies as two miracle-mongers. You see, child, if he were to watch me, he would be sole master of the secret of the treasure. No one in the world but the King can spy on my nocturnal movements. Now I do not know that the King's conscience, near on death as he is, could stand out against thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns. We must be beforehand with him, find the nest, and send all treasure to Ghent. Now you alone ——'

Cornélius suddenly stopped short, as if he were gauging

the heart of this King, who, at two and twenty, had dreamed of parricide. When the treasurer had made up his mind as to Louis XI, he hastily rose, as a man in a hurry to escape some danger.

At this sudden movement, his sister, too weak or too strong for such a crisis, fell down flat; she was dead. Cornélius lifted her up and shook her violently, saying: —

'This is no time for dying; you will have time enough for that afterwards. Oh! it is all over! Wretched creature, she could never do the right thing ——'

He closed her eyes and laid her on the floor. But then the kind and noble feelings that lurked at the bottom of his heart came to the surface, and almost forgetting his undiscovered treasure, he cried out in sorrow: —

'My poor companion! what, have I lost you — you who understood me so well? Ah! you were my real treasure. There, there, lies the treasure. With you I have lost all my peace of mind, all my affections. If you had but known how well it would have paid you to live only two nights longer, you would not have died, if only to please me, poor little woman. I say, Jeanne — thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns! No, even that does not rouse you. No, she is dead, quite dead!'

He thereupon sat down and said no more, but two large tears gathered in his eyes and rolled down his hollow cheeks; then with many an 'Ah!' and sigh he locked the room up and returned to the King. Louis was startled by the grief he saw written on his old friend's features.

'What is this?' said he.

'Alas, Sire, a misfortune never comes single. My sister is dead. She has gone below before me,' and he pointed to the ground with startling emphasis.

'Enough, enough!' said Louis XI, who did not like to hear any mention of death.

'You are my heir. I care for nothing now. Here are my keys. Hang me, if it is your good pleasure. Take

everything; search the house; it is full of gold. I give it all to you.'

'Come, come, gossip,' said the King, half moved by the sight of this strange anguish, 'we will discover the hoard some fine night, and the sight of so much riches will revive your taste for life. I will come again this week.'

'Whenever Your Majesty pleases.'

At these words, the King, who had gone a few steps towards the door, turned sharply round, and the two men looked at each other with an expression that no brush, nor words, could render.

'Good-bye, gossip,' said Louis, at last, in a sharp voice, as he put his bonnet straight.

'May God and the Virgin keep you in their good grace!' the usurer replied humbly, as he escorted the King to the street.

After so long a friendship these two men found a barrier raised between them by distrust and money, whereas they had hitherto been quite agreed on matters of money and distrust; but they knew each other so well, they were so much in the habit of intimacy, that the King could guess from the miser's tone as he rashly said, 'Whenever Your Majesty pleases,' the annoyance his visits would thenceforth be to his treasurer, just as Cornélius had discerned a declaration of war in the way Louis had said 'Good-bye, gossip.'

So Louis XI and his banker parted, very uncertain as to what, for the future, their demeanour was to be. The monarch, indeed, knew the Fleming's secret; but the Fleming on his part could, through his connections, secure the grandest conquest any king of France had yet achieved,—that of the domains of the House of Burgundy, which were just then the object of envy to every sovereign in Europe.

The famous Margaret's choice would be guided by the good folks of Ghent and the Flemings about her. Hoogworst's gold and influence would tell for a great deal in the

negotiations opened by Desquerdes, the captain to whom Louis XI had given the command of the army on the Belgian frontier. Thus these two master foxes were in the position of duellists whose strength had been neutralised by some stroke of fate.

And whether it was that from that day the King's health had failed visibly, or that Cornélius in part promoted the arrival in France of Marguerite of Burgundy, who came to Amboise in July, 1438, to be married to the Dauphin in the chapel of the château, the King claimed no fine from his treasurer and no trial was held; but they remained in the half-cordial terms of an armed friendship.

Happily for the miser, a rumour got about that his sister had committed the thefts, and that she had been privily executed by Tristan. Otherwise, and if the true story had become known, the whole town would have risen in arms to destroy the Malemaison before the King could possibly have defended it.

However, if all this historical guesswork has some foundation with regard to Louis XI's inaction, Master Cornélius Hoogworst cannot be accused of supineness. He spent the first days after this fatal morning in a constant hurry. Like a beast of prey shut up in a cage, he came and went, scenting gold in every corner of his dwelling; he examined every cranny; he tapped the walls; he demanded his treasure of the trees in the garden, of the foundations, of the turret roofs, of earth, and of heaven. Often he would stand for hours looking at everything around him, his eyes searching vacancy. He tried the miracles and second-sight of magic powers, endeavouring to see his gold through space and solid obstacles.

He was constantly absorbed in one overwhelming thought, consumed by an idea that gnawed at his vitals, and yet more cruelly racked by the perennial torments of his duel with himself, since his love of gold had turned to rend itself; it was a sort of incomplete suicide comprehending

all the pangs of living and of dying. Never had a vice so effectually entrapped itself; for the miser who inadvertently locks himself into the subterranean cell where his wealth is buried, has, like Sardanapalus, the satisfaction of perishing in the midst of it. But Cornélius, at once the robber and the robbed, and in the secret of neither, possessed, and yet did not possess, his treasures — a quite new, quite whimsical form of torture, but perpetually excruciating.

Sometimes, almost oblivious, he would leave the little wicket of his door open, and then the passers-by could see the shrivelled old man standing in the middle of his neglected garden, perfectly motionless, and looking at any who stopped to gaze at him, with a fixed stare, a lurid glare, that froze them with terror. If by chance he went out into the streets of the town, you would have thought he was a stranger; he never knew where he was, nor whether it was the sun or the moon that were shining. He would often ask his way of the persons he met, fancying himself at Ghent, and he seemed always to be looking for his lost treasure.

The most irrepressible and most incorporate of all human ideas, — that by which a man identifies himself by creating outside and apart from his person the whole fictitious entity which he calls his property, — this demon idea had its talons constantly clutching at the miser's soul.

Then, in the midst of his torments, Fear would rise up with all the feelings that come in its train. For, in fact, two men knew his secret — the secret which he himself did not know. Louis XI or Coyctier might post their spies to watch his movements while he was asleep, and discover the unknown gulf into which he had flung his wealth with the blood of so many innocent men; for Remorse kept watch with Fear.

To preserve his lost riches from being snatched from him while he lived, during the early days after his disaster,

he took the utmost precaution to avoid sleeping, and his connection with the commercial world enabled him to procure the strongest anti-narcotics. His wakeful nights must have been terrible; he was alone to struggle against the night and silence, against remorse and fear, and all the thoughts that man has most effectually personified — instinctively, no doubt, in obedience to some law of the mind, true, though not yet proved.

In short, this man, strong as he was; this heart, annealed by the life of politics and commerce; this genius, though unknown to history, — was doomed to succumb under the horrors of the torments he himself had created. Crushed by some reflection even more cruel than all that had gone before, he cut his throat with a razor.

His death almost exactly coincided in time with the King's, so that the House of Evil was plundered by the mob. Some of the older inhabitants of the province asserted that a revenue farmer named Bohier had found the extortioner's treasure, and had employed it in building the beginnings of the château of Chenonceaux, that wonderful palace which, in spite of the lavish outlay of several kings and the fine taste of Diane de Poitiers and her rival Catherine de' Medici, is still unfinished.

Happily for Marie de Sassenage, the Comte de Saint-Vallier died, as is well known, as ambassador to Venice. The family did not become extinct. After the Count's departure his wife had a son, whose fortunes were famous in the history of France under the reign of François I. He was saved by his daughter, the famous Diane de Poitiers, Louis XI's illegitimate great-granddaughter; and she became the illegal wife, the adored mistress, of Henri II; for in that noble family bastardy and love were hereditary.

Château de Saché, *November and December*, 1831.

GAMBARA

To Monsieur le Marquis de Belloy

It was sitting by the fire, in a mysterious and magnificent retreat, — now a thing of the past but surviving in our memory, — whence cur eyes commanded a view of Paris from the heights of Bellevue to those of Belleville, from Montmartre to the triumphal Arc de l'Étoile, that one morning, refreshed by tea, amid the myriad suggestions that shoot up and die like rockets from your sparkling flow of talk, lavish of ideas, you tossed to my pen a figure worthy of Hoffmann — that casket of unrecognised gems, that pilgrim seated at the gate of Paradise with ears to hear the songs of the angels but no longer a tongue to repeat them, playing on the ivory keys with fingers crippled by the stress of divine inspiration, believing that he is expressing celestial music to his bewildered listeners.

It was you who created GAMBARA; I have only clothed him. Let me render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, regretting only that you do not yourself take up the pen at a time when gentlemen ought to wield it as well as the sword, if they are to save their country. You may neglect yourself, but you owe your talents to us.

New Year's day of 1831 was pouring out its packets of sugared almonds, four o'clock was striking, there was a mob in the Palais-Royal, and the eating-houses were beginning to fill. At this moment a coupé drew up at the *perron* and a young man stepped out; a man of haughty

appearance, and no doubt a foreigner; otherwise he would not have displayed the aristocratic *chasseur* who attended him in a plumed hat, nor the coat of arms which the heroes of July still attacked.

This gentleman went into the Palais-Royal, and followed the crowd round the galleries, unamazed at the slowness to which the throng of loungers reduced his pace; he seemed accustomed to the stately step which is ironically nicknamed the ambassador's strut; still, his dignity had a touch of the theatrical. Though his features were handsome and imposing, his hat, from beneath which thick black curls stood out, was perhaps tilted a little too much over the right ear, and belied his gravity by a too rakish effect. His eyes, inattentive and half closed, looked down disdainfully on the crowd.

'There goes a remarkably good-looking young man,' said a girl in a low voice, as she made way for him to pass.

'And who is only too well aware of it!' replied her companion aloud — who was very plain.

After walking all round the arcades, the young man looked by turns at the sky and at his watch, and with a shrug of impatience went into a tobacconist's shop, lighted a cigar, and placed himself in front of a looking-glass to glance at his costume, which was rather more ornate than the rules of French taste allow. He pulled down his collar and his black velvet waistcoat, over which hung many festoons of the thick gold chain that is made at Venice; then, having arranged the folds of his cloak by a single jerk of his left shoulder, draping it gracefully so as to show the velvet lining, he started again on parade, indifferent to the glances of the vulgar.

As soon as the shops were lighted up and the dusk seemed to him black enough, he went out into the square in front of the Palais-Royal, but as a man anxious not to be recognised; for he kept close under the houses as far as the fountain, screened by the hackney-cab stand, till he



reached the Rue Froid-Manteau, a dirty, poky, disreputable street — a sort of sewer tolerated by the police close to the purified purlieus of the Palais-Royal, as an Italian major-domo allows a careless servant to leave the sweepings of the rooms in a corner of the staircase.

The young man hesitated. He might have been a bedizened citizen's wife craning her neck over a gutter swollen by the rain. But the hour was not unpropitious for the indulgence of some discreditable whim. Earlier, he might have been detected; later, he might find himself cut out. Tempted by a glance which is encouraging without being inviting, to have followed a young and pretty woman for an hour, or perhaps for a day, thinking of her as a divinity and excusing her light conduct by a thousand reasons to her advantage; to have allowed oneself to believe in a sudden and irresistible affinity; to have pictured, under the promptings of transient excitement, a love-adventure in an age when romances are written precisely because they never happen; to have dreamed of balconies, guitars, stratagems, and bolts, enwrapped in Almaviva's cloak; and, after inditing a poem in fancy, to stop at the door of a house of ill-fame, and, crowning all, to discern in Rosina's bashfulness a reticence imposed by the police — is not all this, I say, an experience familiar to many a man who would not own it?

The most natural feelings are those we are least willing to confess, and among them is fatuity. When the lesson is carried no further, the Parisian profits by it, or forgets it, and no great harm is done. But this would hardly be the case with this foreigner, who was beginning to think he might pay too dearly for his Paris education.

This personage was a Milanese of good family, exiled from his native country, where some 'liberal' pranks had made him an object of suspicion to the Austrian Government. Count Andrea Marcosini had been welcomed in Paris with the cordiality, essentially French, that a man

always finds there, when he has a pleasant wit, a sounding name, two hundred thousand francs a year, and a prepossessing person. To such a man banishment could but be a pleasure tour; his property was simply sequestrated, and his friends let him know that after an absence of two years he might return to his native land without danger.

After riming *crudeli affanni* with *i miei tiranni* in a dozen or so of sonnets, and maintaining as many hapless Italian refugees out of his own purse, Count Andrea, who was so unlucky as to be a poet, thought himself released from patriotic obligations. So, ever since his arrival, he had given himself up recklessly to the pleasures of every kind which Paris offers *gratis* to those who can pay for them. His talents and his handsome person won him success among women, whom he adored collectively as beseemed his years, but among whom he had not as yet distinguished a chosen one. And indeed this taste was, in him, subordinate to those for music and poetry which he had cultivated from his childhood; and he thought success in these both more difficult and more glorious to achieve than in affairs of gallantry, since nature had not inflicted on him the obstacles men take most pride in defying.

A man, like many another, of complex nature, he was easily fascinated by the comfort of luxury, without which he could hardly have lived; and, in the same way, he clung to the social distinctions which his principles contemned. Thus his theories as an artist, a thinker, and a poet were in frequent antagonism with his tastes, his feelings, and his habits as a man of rank and wealth; but he comforted himself for his inconsistencies by recognising them in many Parisians, like himself liberal by policy and aristocrats by nature.

Hence it was not without some uneasiness that he found himself, on December 31, 1830, under a Paris thaw,

following at the heels of a woman whose dress betrayed the most abject, inveterate, and long-accustomed poverty, who was no handsomer than a hundred others to be seen any evening at the play, at the opera, in the world of fashion, and who was certainly not so young as Madame de Manerville, from whom he had obtained an assignation for that very day, and who was perhaps waiting for him at that very hour.

But in the glance at once tender and wild, swift and deep, which that woman's black eyes had shot at him by stealth, there was such a world of buried sorrows and promised joys! And she had coloured so fiercely when, on coming out of a shop where she had lingered a quarter of an hour, her look frankly met the Count's, who had been waiting for her hard by! In fact, there were so many *buts* and *ifs*, that, possessed by one of those mad temptations for which there is no word in any language, not even in that of the orgy, he had set out in pursuit of this woman, hunting her down like a hardened Parisian.

On the way, whether he kept behind or ahead of this damsel, he studied every detail of her person and her dress, hoping to dislodge the insane and ridiculous fancy that had taken up an abode in his brain; but he presently found in his examination a keener pleasure than he had felt only the day before in gazing at the perfect shape of a woman he loved, as she took her bath. Now and again, the unknown fair, bending her head, gave him a look like that of a kid tethered with its head to the ground, and finding herself still the object of his pursuit, she hurried on as if to fly. Nevertheless, each time that a block of carriages, or any other delay, brought Andrea to her side, he saw her turn away from his gaze without any signs of annoyance. These signals of restrained feeling spurred the frenzied dreams that had run away with him, and he gave them the rein as far as the Rue Froid-Manteau, down which, after many windings, the damsel vanished, thinking

she had thus spoilt the scent for her pursuer, who was, in fact, startled by this move.

It was now quite dark. Two women, tattooed with rouge, who were drinking black-currant liqueur at a grocer's counter, saw the young woman and called her. She paused at the door of the shop, replied in a few soft words to the cordial greeting offered her, and went on her way. Andrea, who was behind her, saw her turn into one of the darkest yards out of this street, of which he did not know the name. The repulsive appearance of the house where the heroine of his romance had been swallowed up made him feel sick. He drew back a step to study the neighbourhood, and finding an ill-looking man at his elbow, he asked him for information. The man, who held a knotted stick in his right hand, placed the left on his hip and replied in the single word —

'Scoundrel!'

But on looking at the Italian, who stood in the light of a street-lamp, he assumed a servile expression.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said he, suddenly changing his tone. 'There is a restaurant near this, a sort of table-d'hôte, where the cooking is pretty bad and they serve cheese in the soup. Monsieur is in search of the place, perhaps, for it is easy to see that he is an Italian — Italians are fond of velvet and of cheese. But if Monsieur would like to know of a better eating-house, an aunt of mine, who lives a few steps off, is very fond of foreigners.'

Andrea raised his cloak as high as his moustache, and fled from the street, spurred by the disgust he felt at this foul person, whose clothes and manner were in harmony with the squalid house into which the fair unknown had vanished. He returned with rapture to the thousand luxuries of his own rooms, and spent the evening at the Marquise d'Espard's to cleanse himself, if possible, of the smirch left by the fancy that had driven him so relentlessly during the day.

And yet, when he was in bed, the vision came back to him, but clearer and brighter than the reality. The girl was walking in front of him; now and again as she stepped across a gutter her skirts revealed a round calf; her shapely hips swayed as she walked. Again Andrea longed to speak to her — and he dared not, he, Marcosini, a Milanese nobleman! Then he saw her turn into the dark passage where she had eluded him, and blamed himself for not having followed her.

'For, after all,' said he to himself, 'if she really wished to avoid me and put me off her track, it is because she loves me. With women of that stamp, coyness is a proof of love. Well, if I had carried the adventure any further, it would, perhaps, have ended in disgust. I will sleep in peace.'

The Count was in the habit of analysing his keenest sensations, as men do involuntarily when they have as much brains as heart, and he was surprised when he saw the strange damsel of the Rue Froid-Manteau once more, not in the pictured splendour of his dream but in the bare reality of dreary fact. And, in spite of it all, if fancy had stripped the woman of her livery of misery, it would have spoilt her for him; for he wanted her, he longed for her, he loved her — with her muddy stockings, her slip-shod feet, her straw bonnet! He wanted her in the very house where he had seen her go in.

'Am I bewitched by vice, then?' he asked himself in dismay. 'Nay, I have not yet reached that point. I am but three and twenty, and there is nothing of the senile fop about me.'

The very vehemence of the whim that held possession of him to some extent reassured him. This strange struggle, these reflections, and this love in pursuit may perhaps puzzle some persons who are accustomed to the ways of Paris life; but they may be reminded that Count Andrea Marcosini was not a Frenchman.

Brought up by two abbés, who, in obedience to a very pious father, had rarely let him out of their sight, Andrea had not fallen in love with a cousin at the age of eleven, or seduced his mother's maid by the time he was twelve; he had not studied at school, where a lad does not learn only, or best, the subjects prescribed by the State; he had lived in Paris but a few years, and he was still open to those sudden but deep impressions against which French education and manners are so strong a protection. In southern lands a great passion is often born of a glance. A gentleman of Gascony who had tempered strong feelings by much reflection had fortified himself by many little recipes against sudden apoplexies of taste and heart, and he advised the Count to indulge at least once a month in a wild orgy to avert those storms of the soul which, but for such precautions, are apt to break out at inappropriate moments. Andrea now remembered this advice.

'Well,' thought he, 'I will begin to-morrow, January 1st.'

This explains why Count Andrea Marcosini hovered so shyly before turning down the Rue Froid-Manteau. The man of fashion hampered the lover, and he hesitated for some time; but after a final appeal to his courage he went on with a firm step as far as the house, which he recognised without difficulty.

There he stopped once more. Was the woman really what he fancied her? Was he not on the verge of some false move?

At this juncture he remembered the Italian table-d'hôte, and at once jumped at a middle course, which would serve the ends alike of his curiosity and of his reputation. He went in to dine, and made his way down the passage; at the bottom, after feeling about for some time, he found a staircase with damp, slippery steps, such as to an Italian nobleman could only seem a ladder.

Invited to the first floor by the glimmer of a lamp and a strong smell of cooking, he pushed a door which stood ajar and saw a room dingy with dirt and smoke, where a wench was busy laying a table for about twenty customers. None of the guests had yet arrived.

After looking round the dimly lighted room where the paper was dropping in rags from the walls, the gentleman seated himself by a stove which was roaring and smoking in the corner.

Attracted by the noise the Count made in coming in and disposing of his cloak, the major-domo presently appeared. Picture to yourself a lean, dried-up cook, very tall, with a nose of extravagant dimensions, casting about him from time to time, with feverish keenness, a glance that he meant to be cautious. On seeing Andrea, whose attire bespoke considerable affluence, Signor Giardini bowed respectfully.

The Count expressed his intention of taking his meals as a rule in the society of some of his fellow-countrymen; he paid in advance for a certain number of tickets, and ingenuously gave the conversation a familiar bent to enable him to achieve his purpose quickly.

Hardly had he mentioned the woman he was seeking when Signor Giardini, with a grotesque shrug, looked knowingly at his customer, a bland smile on his lips.

'*Basta!*' he exclaimed. '*Capisco.* Your Excellency has come spurred by two appetites. La Signora Gambara will not have wasted her time if she has gained the interest of a gentleman so generous as you appear to be. I can tell you in a few words all we know of the woman, who is really to be pitied.

'The husband is, I believe, a native of Cremona and has just come here from Germany. He was hoping to get the Tedeschi to try some new music and some new instruments. Isn't it pitiable?' said Giardini, shrugging his shoulders. 'Signor Gambara, who thinks himself a great composer, does not seem to me very clever in other ways. An excel-

lent fellow with sense and wit, and sometimes very agreeable, especially when he has had a few glasses of wine — which does not often happen, for he is desperately poor; night and day he toils at imaginary symphonies and operas instead of trying to earn an honest living. His poor wife is reduced to working for all sorts of people — the women on the streets! What is to be said? She loves her husband like a father, and takes care of him like a child.

'Many a young man has dined here to pay his court to Madame; but not one has succeeded,' said he, emphasising the word. 'La Signora Marianna is an honest woman, Monsieur, much too honest, worse luck for her! Men give nothing for nothing nowadays. So the poor soul will die in harness.

'And do you suppose that her husband rewards her for her devotion? Pooh, my lord never gives her a smile! And all their cooking is done at the baker's; for not only does the wretched man never earn a sou; he spends all his wife can make on instruments which he carves, and lengthens, and shortens, and sets up and takes to pieces again till they produce sounds that would scare a cat; then he is happy. And yet you will find him the mildest, the gentlest of men. And he is not idle; he is always at it. What is to be said? He is crazy and does not know his business. I have seen him, Monsieur, filing and forging his instruments and eating black bread with an appetite that I envied him — I, who have the best table in Paris.

'Yes, Excellenza, in a quarter of an hour you shall know the man I am. I have introduced certain refinements into Italian cookery that will amaze you! Excellenza, I am a Neapolitan — that is to say, a born cook. But of what use is instinct without knowledge? Knowledge! I have spent thirty years in acquiring it, and you see where it has left me. My history is that of every man of talent. My attempts, my experiments, have ruined three restaurants in succession at Naples, Parma, and Rome. To this day, when I am

reduced to make a trade of my art, I more often than not give way to my ruling passion. I give these poor refugees some of my choicest dishes. I ruin myself! Folly! you will say? I know it; but how can I help it? Genius carries me away, and I cannot resist concocting a dish which smiles on my fancy.

'And they always know it, the rascals! They know, I can promise you, whether I or my wife has stood over the fire. And what is the consequence? Of sixty-odd customers whom I used to see at my table every day when I first started in this wretched place, I now see twenty on an average, and give them credit for the most part. The Piedmontese, the Savoyards, have deserted, but the connoisseurs, the true Italians, remain. And there is no sacrifice that I would not make for them. I often give them a dinner for five and twenty sous which has cost me double.'

Signor Giardini's speech had such a full flavour of Neapolitan cunning that the Count was delighted, and could have fancied himself at Gérolamo's.

'Since that is the case, my good friend,' said he familiarly to the cook, 'and since chance and your confidence have let me into the secret of your daily sacrifices, allow me to pay double.'

As he spoke Andrea spun a forty-franc piece on the stove, out of which Giardini solemnly gave him two francs and fifty centimes in change, not without a certain ceremonious mystery that amused him hugely.

'In a few minutes now,' the man added, 'you will see your *donnina*. I will seat you next the husband, and if you wish to stand in his good graces, talk about music. I have invited every one for this evening, poor things. Being New Year's day, I am treating the company to a dish in which I believe I have surpassed myself.'

Signor Giardini's voice was drowned by the noisy greetings of the guests, who streamed in two and two, or one at a time, after the manner of tables-d'hôte. Giardini stayed

by the Count, playing the showman by telling him who the company were. He tried by his witticisms to bring a smile to the lips of a man who, as his Neapolitan instinct told him, might be a wealthy patron to turn to good account.

'This one,' said he, 'is a poor composer who would like to rise from song-writing to opera, and cannot. He blames the managers, music-sellers, — everybody, in fact, but himself, and he has no worse enemy. You can see — what a florid complexion, what self-conceit, how little firmness in his features! he is made to write ballads. The man who is with him, and looks like a match-hawker, is a great musical celebrity — Gigelmi, the greatest Italian conductor known; but he has gone deaf, and is ending his days in penury, deprived of all that made it tolerable. Ah! here comes our great Ottoboni, the most guileless old fellow on earth; but he is suspected of being the most vindictive of all who are plotting for the regeneration of Italy. I cannot think how they can bear to banish such a good old man.'

And here Giardini looked narrowly at the Count, who, feeling himself under inquisition as to his politics, entrenched himself in Italian impassibility.

'A man whose business it is to cook for all comers can have no political opinions, Excellenza,' Giardini went on. 'But to see that worthy man, who looks more like a lamb than a lion, everybody would say what I say, were it before the Austrian ambassador himself. Besides, in these times liberty is no longer proscribed; it is going its rounds again. At least, so these good people think,' said he, leaning over to speak in the Count's ear, 'and why should I thwart their hopes? I, for my part, do not hate an absolute government. Excellenza, every man of talent is for despotism!

'Well, though full of genius, Ottoboni takes no end of pains to educate Italy; he writes little books to enlighten the intelligence of the children and the common people,

and he smuggles them very cleverly into Italy. He takes immense trouble to reform the moral sense of our luckless country, which, after all, prefers pleasure to freedom,—and perhaps it is right.'

The Count preserved such an impenetrable attitude that the cook could discover nothing of his political views.

'Ottoboni,' he ran on, 'is a saint; very kind-hearted; all the refugees are fond of him; for, Excellenza, a liberal may have his virtues. Oho! Here comes a journalist,' said Giardini, as a man came in dressed in the absurd way which used to be attributed to a poet in a garret; his coat was threadbare, his boots split, his hat shiny, and his overcoat deplorably ancient. 'Excellenza, that poor man is full of talent, and incorruptibly honest. He was born into the wrong times, for he tells the truth to everybody; no one can endure him. He writes theatrical articles for two small papers, though he is clever enough to work for the great dailies. Poor fellow!

'The rest are not worth mentioning, and Your Excellency will find them out,' he concluded, seeing that on the entrance of the musician's wife the Count had ceased to listen to him.

On seeing Andrea here, Signora Marianna started visibly and a bright blush tinged her cheeks.

'Here he is!' said Giardini, in an undertone, clutching the Count's arm and nodding to a tall man. 'How pale and grave he is, poor man! His hobby has not trotted to his mind to-day, I fancy.'

Andrea's prepossession for Marianna was crossed by the captivating charm which Gambara could not fail to exert over every genuine artist. The composer was now forty; but although his high brow was bald and lined with a few parallel, but not deep, wrinkles; in spite, too, of hollow temples where the blue veins showed through the smooth, transparent skin, and of the deep sockets in which

his black eyes were sunk, with their large lids and light lashes, the lower part of his face made him still look young, so calm was its outline, so soft the modelling. It could be seen at a glance that in this man passion had been curbed to the advantage of the intellect; that the brain alone had grown old in some great struggle.

Andrea shot a swift look at Marianna, who was watching him. And as he noted the beautiful Italian head, the exquisite proportion and rich colouring that revealed one of those organisations in which every human power is harmoniously balanced, he sounded the gulf that divided this couple, brought together by fate. Well content with the promise he inferred from this dissimilarity between the husband and wife, he made no attempt to control a liking which ought to have raised a barrier between the fair Marianna and himself. He was already conscious of feeling a sort of respectful pity for this man, whose only joy she was, as he understood the dignified and serene acceptance of ill fortune that was expressed in Gambara's mild and melancholy gaze.

After expecting to see one of the grotesque figures so often set before us by German novelists and the writers of *libretti*, he beheld a simple, unpretentious man, whose manners and demeanour were in nothing strange and did not lack dignity. Without the faintest trace of luxury, his dress was more decent than might have been expected from his extreme poverty, and his linen bore witness to the tender care which watched over every detail of his existence. Andrea looked at Marianna with moistened eyes; and she did not colour, but half smiled, in a way that betrayed, perhaps, some pride at this speechless homage. The Count, too thoroughly fascinated to miss the smallest indication of complaisance, fancied that she must love him, since she understood him so well.

From this moment he set himself to conquer the husband rather than the wife, turning all his batteries against

poor Gambara, who quite guilelessly went on eating Signor Giardini's *bocconi*, without thinking of their flavour.

The Count opened the conversation on some trivial subject, but at the first words he perceived that this brain, supposed to be infatuated on one point, was remarkably clear on all others, and saw that it would be far more important to enter into this very clever man's ideas than to flatter his conceits.

The rest of the company, a hungry crew whose brain only responded to the sight of a more or less good meal, showed much animosity to the luckless Gambara, and waited only till the end of the first course, to give free vent to their satire. A refugee, whose frequent leer betrayed ambitious schemes on Marianna, and who fancied he could establish himself in her good graces by trying to make her husband ridiculous, opened fire to show the newcomer how the land lay at the table-d'hôte.

'It is a very long time since we have heard anything about the opera on "Mahomet"!' cried he, with a smile at Marianna. 'Can it be that Paolo Gambara, wholly given up to domestic cares, absorbed by the charms of the chimney-corner, is neglecting his superhuman genius, leaving his talents to get cold and his imagination to go flat?'

Gambara knew all the company; he dwelt in a sphere so far above them all that he no longer cared to repel an attack. He made no reply.

'It is not given to everybody,' said the journalist, 'to have an intellect that can understand Monsieur Gambara's musical efforts, and that, no doubt, is why our divine maestro hesitates to come before the worthy Parisian public.'

'And yet,' said the ballad-monger, who had not opened his mouth but to swallow everything that came within his reach, 'I know some men of talent who think highly of the judgments of Parisian critics. I myself have a pretty reputation as a musician,' he went on, with an air of diffi-

dence. 'I owe it solely to my little songs in *vaudevilles*, and the success of my dance music in drawing-rooms; but I propose ere long to bring out a mass composed for the anniversary of Beethoven's death, and I expect to be better appreciated in Paris than anywhere else. You will perhaps do me the honour of hearing it?' he said, turning to Andrea.

'Thank you,' said the Count. 'But I do not conceive that I am gifted with the organs needful for the appreciation of French music. If you were dead, Monsieur, and Beethoven had composed the mass, I would not have failed to attend the performance.'

This retort put an end to the tactics of those who wanted to set Gambara off on his high horse to amuse the new guest. Andrea was already conscious of an unwillingness to expose so noble and pathetic a mania as a spectacle for so much vulgar shrewdness. It was with no base reservation that he kept up a desultory conversation, in the course of which Signor Giardini's nose not infrequently interposed between two remarks. Whenever Gambara uttered some elegant repartee or some paradoxical aphorism, the cook put his head forward, to glance with pity at the musician and with meaning at the Count, muttering in his ear, '*E matto!*'

Then came a moment when the *chef* interrupted the flow of his judicial observations to devote himself to the second course, which he considered highly important. During his absence, which was brief, Gambara leaned across to address Andrea.

'Our worthy host,' said he, in an undertone, 'threatens to regale us to-day with a dish of his own concocting, which I recommend you to avoid, though his wife has had an eye on him. The good man has a mania for innovations. He ruined himself by experiments, the last of which compelled him to fly from Rome without a passport — a circumstance he does not talk about. After purchasing the good-will of a popular restaurant he was trusted to prepare

a banquet given by a lately made Cardinal, whose household was not yet complete. Giardini fancied he had an opportunity for distinguishing himself — and he succeeded! for that same evening he was accused of trying to poison the whole conclave, and was obliged to leave Rome and Italy without waiting to pack up. This disaster was the last straw. Now,' and Gambara put his finger to his forehead and shook his head.

'He is a good fellow, all the same,' he added. 'My wife will tell you that we owe him many a good turn.'

Giardini now came in carefully bearing a dish which he set in the middle of the table, and he then modestly resumed his seat next to Andrea, whom he served first. As soon as he had tasted the mess, the Count felt that an impassable gulf divided the second mouthful from the first. He was much embarrassed, and very anxious not to annoy the cook, who was watching him narrowly. Though a French *restaurateur* may care little about seeing a dish scorned if he is sure of being paid for it, it is not so with an Italian, who is not often satiated with praises.

To gain time, Andrea complimented Giardini enthusiastically, but he leaned over to whisper in his ear, and slipping a gold piece into his hand under the table, begged him to go out and buy a few bottles of champagne, leaving him free to take all the credit of the treat.

When the Italian returned, every plate was cleared, and the room rang with praises of the master-cook. The champagne soon mounted these southern brains, and the conversation, till now subdued in the stranger's presence, overleaped the limits of suspicious reserve to wander far over the wide fields of political and artistic opinions.

Andrea, to whom no form of intoxication was known but those of love and poetry, had soon gained the attention of the company and skilfully led it to a discussion of matters musical.

'Will you tell me, Monsieur,' said he to the composer

of dance-music, 'how it is that the Napoleon of these tunes can condescend to usurp the place of Palestrina, Pergolesi, and Mozart, — poor creatures who must pack and vanish at the advent of that tremendous Mass for the Dead?'

'Well, Monsieur,' replied the composer, 'a musician always finds it difficult to reply when the answer needs the coöperation of a hundred skilled executants. Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, without an orchestra, would be of no great account.'

'Of no great account!' said Marcosini. 'Why, all the world knows that the immortal author of *Don Giovanni* and the *Requiem* was named Mozart; and I am so unhappy as not to know the name of the inexhaustible writer of quadrilles which are so popular in our drawing-rooms ——'

'Music exists independently of execution,' said the retired conductor, who, in spite of his deafness, had caught a few words of the conversation. 'As he looks through the C-minor symphony by Beethoven, a musician is transported to the world of fancy on the golden wings of the subject in G-natural repeated by the horns in E. He sees a whole realm, by turns glorious in dazzling shafts of light, gloomy under clouds of melancholy, and cheered by heavenly strains.'

'The new school has left Beethoven far behind,' said the ballad-writer, scornfully.

'Beethoven is not yet understood,' said the Count. 'How can he be excelled?'

Gambara drank a large glass of champagne, accompanying the draught by a covert smile of approval.

'Beethoven,' the Count went on, 'extended the limits of instrumental music, and no one has followed in his track.'

Gambara assented with a nod.

'His work is especially noteworthy for simplicity of construction and for the way the scheme is worked out,' the

Count went on. 'Most composers make use of the orchestral parts in a vague, incoherent way, combining them for a merely temporary effect; they do not persistently contribute to the whole mass of the movement by their steady and regular progress. Beethoven assigns its part to each tone-quality from the first. Like the various companies which, by their disciplined movements, contribute to winning a battle, the orchestral parts of a symphony by Beethoven obey the plan ordered for the interest of all, and are subordinate to an admirably conceived scheme.

'In this he may be compared to a genius of a different type. In Walter Scott's splendid historical novels, some personage, who seems to have least to do with the action of the story, intervenes at a given moment and leads up to climax by some thread woven into the plot.'

'*E vero!*' remarked Gambara, to whom common sense seemed to return in inverse proportion to sobriety.

Andrea, eager to carry the test further, for a moment forgot all his predilections; he proceeded to attack the European fame of Rossini, disputing the position which the Italian school has taken by storm, night after night for more than thirty years, on a hundred stages in Europe. He had undertaken a hard task. The first words he spoke raised a strong murmur of disapproval; but neither repeated interruptions, nor exclamations, nor frowns, nor contemptuous looks, could check this determined advocate of Beethoven.

'Compare,' said he, 'that sublime composer's works with what by common consent is called Italian music. What feebleness of ideas, what limpness of style! That monotony of form, those commonplace cadenzas, those endless bravura passages introduced at haphazard irrespective of the dramatic situation, that recurrent *crescendo* that Rossini brought into vogue, are now an integral part of every composition; those vocal fireworks result in a sort

of babbling, chattering, vaporous music, of which the sole merit depends on the greater or less fluency of the singer and his rapidity of vocalisation.

'The Italian school has lost sight of the high mission of art. Instead of elevating the crowd, it has condescended to the crowd; it has won its success only by accepting the suffrages of all comers, and appealing to the vulgar minds which constitute the majority. Such a success is mere street juggling.

'In short, the compositions of Rossini, in whom this music is personified, with those of the writers who are more or less of his school, to me seem worthy at best to collect a crowd in the street round a grinding organ, as an accompaniment to the capers of a puppet show. I even prefer French music, and I can say no more. Long live German music!' cried he, 'when it is tuneful,' he added in a low voice.

This sally was the upshot of a long preliminary discussion, in which, for more than a quarter of an hour, Andrea had divagated in the upper sphere of metaphysics, with the ease of a somnambulist walking over the roofs.

Gambara, keenly interested in all this transcendentalism, had not lost a word; he took up his parable as soon as Andrea seemed to have ended, and a little stir of revived attention was evident among the guests, of whom several had been about to leave.

'You attack the Italian school with much vigour,' said Gambara, somewhat warmed to his work by the champagne, 'and, for my part, you are very welcome. I, thank God, stand outside this more or less melodic frippery. Still, as a man of the world, you are too ungrateful to the classic land whence Germany and France derived their first teaching. While the compositions of Carissimi, Cavalli, Scarlatti, and Rossi were being played throughout Italy, the violin players of the Paris opera house enjoyed the singular privilege of being allowed to play in gloves.

Lulli, who extended the realm of harmony, and was the first to classify discords, on arriving in France found but two men — a cook and a mason — whose voice and intelligence were equal to performing his music; he made a tenor of the former, and transformed the latter into a bass. At that time Germany had no musician excepting Sebastian Bach. — But you, Monsieur, though you are so young,' Gambara added, in the humble tone of a man who expects to find his remarks received with scorn or ill-nature, 'must have given much time to the study of these high matters of art; you could not otherwise explain them so clearly.'

This word made many of the hearers smile, for they had understood nothing of the fine distinctions drawn by Andrea. Giardini, indeed, convinced that the Count had been talking mere rodomontade, nudged him with a laugh in his sleeve, as at a good joke in which he flattered himself that he was a partner.

'There is a great deal that strikes me as very true in all you have said,' Gambara went on; 'but be careful. Your argument, while reflecting on Italian sensuality, seems to me to lean towards German idealism, which is a no less fatal heresy. If men of imagination and good sense, like you, desert one camp only to join the other; if they cannot keep to the happy medium between two forms of extravagance, we shall always be exposed to the satire of the sophists, who deny all progress, who compare the genius of man to this tablecloth, which, being too short to cover the whole of Signor Giardini's table, decks one end at the expense of the other.'

Giardini bounded in his seat as if he had been stung by a horse-fly, but swift reflection restored him to his dignity as a host; he looked up to heaven and again nudged the Count, who was beginning to think the cook more crazy than Gambara.

This serious and pious way of speaking of art interested

the Milanese extremely. Seated between these two distracted brains, one so noble and the other so common, and making game of each other to the great entertainment of the crowd, there was a moment when the Count found himself wavering between the sublime and its parody, the farcical extremes of human life. Ignoring the chain of incredible events which had brought him to this smoky den, he believed himself to be the plaything of some strange hallucination, and thought of Gambara and Giardini as two abstractions.

Meanwhile, after a last piece of buffoonery from the deaf conductor in reply to Gambara, the company had broken up laughing loudly. Giardini went off to make coffee, which he begged the select few to accept, and his wife cleared the table. The Count, sitting near the stove between Marianna and Gambara, was in the very position which the mad musician thought most desirable, with sensuousness on one side and idealism on the other. Gambara, finding himself for the first time in the society of a man who did not laugh at him to his face, soon diverged from generalities to talk of himself, of his life, his work, and the musical regeneration of which he believed himself to be the Messiah.

'Listen,' said he, 'you who so far have not insulted me. I will tell you the story of my life; not to make a boast of my perseverance, which is no virtue of mine, but to the greater glory of Him who has given me His strength. You seem kind and pious; if you do not believe in me at least you will pity me. Pity is human; faith comes from God.'

Andrea turned and drew back under his chair the foot that had been seeking that of the fair Marianna, fixing his eyes on her while listening to Gambara.

'I was born at Cremona, the son of an instrument maker, a fairly good performer and an even better composer,' the musician began. 'Thus at an early age I had

mastered the laws of musical construction in its twofold aspects, the material and the spiritual; and as an inquisitive child I observed many things which subsequently recurred to the mind of the full-grown man.

'The French turned us out of our own home — my father and me. We were ruined by the war. Thus, at the age of ten I entered on the wandering life to which most men have been condemned whose brains were busy with innovations, whether in art, science, or politics. Fate, or the instincts of their mind which cannot fit into the compartments where the trading class sit, providentially guides them to the spots where they may find teaching. Led by my passion for music I wandered throughout Italy from theatre to theatre, living on very little, as men can live there. Sometimes I played the bass in an orchestra, sometimes I was on the boards in the chorus, sometimes under them with the carpenters. Thus I learned every kind of musical effect, studying the tones of instruments and of the human voice, wherein they differed and how they harmonised, listening to the score and applying the rules taught me by my father.

'It was hungry work, in a land where the sun always shines, where art is all pervading, but where there is no pay for the artist, since Rome is but nominally the Sovereign of the Christian world. Sometimes made welcome, sometimes scouted for my poverty, I never lost courage. I heard a voice within me promising me fame.

'Music seemed to me in its infancy, and I think so still. All that is left to us of musical effort before the seventeenth century, proves to me that early musicians knew melody only; they were ignorant of harmony and its immense resources. Music is at once a science and an art. It is rooted in physics and mathematics, hence it is a science; inspiration makes it an art, unconsciously utilising the theorems of science. It is founded in physics by the very nature of the matter it works on. Sound is air in

motion. The air is formed of constituents which, in us, no doubt, meet with analogous elements that respond to them, sympathise, and magnify them by the power of the mind. Thus the air must include a vast variety of molecules of various degrees of elasticity, and capable of vibrating in as many different periods as there are tones from all kinds of sonorous bodies; and these molecules, set in motion by the musician and falling on our ear, answer to our ideas, according to each man's temperament. I myself believe that sound is identical in its nature with light. Sound is light, perceived under another form; each acts through vibrations to which man is sensitive and which he transforms, in the nervous centres, into ideas.

'Music, like painting, makes use of materials which have the property of liberating this or that property from the surrounding medium and so suggesting an image. The instruments in music perform this part, as colour does in painting. And whereas each sound produced by a sonorous body is invariably allied with its major third and fifth, whereas it acts on grains of fine sand lying on stretched parchment so as to distribute them in geometrical figures that are always the same, according to the pitch, — quite regular when the combination is a true chord, and indefinite when the sounds are dissonant, — I say that music is an art conceived in the very bowels of nature.

'Music is subject to physical and mathematical laws. Physical laws are but little known, mathematics are well understood; and it is since their relations have been studied, that the harmony has been created to which we owe the works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Rossini, grand geniuses, whose music is undoubtedly nearer to perfection than that of their precursors, though their genius, too, is unquestionable. The old masters could sing, but they had not art and science at their command, — a noble alliance which enables us to merge into one the finest melody and the power of harmony.

'Now, if a knowledge of mathematical laws gave us these four great musicians, what may we not attain to if we can discover the physical laws in virtue of which — grasp this clearly — we may collect, in larger or smaller quantities, according to the proportions we may require, an ethereal substance diffused in the atmosphere which is the medium alike of music and of light, of the phenomena of vegetation and of animal life! Do you follow me? Those new laws would arm the composer with new powers by supplying him with instruments superior to those now in use, and perhaps with a potency of harmony immense as compared with that now at his command. If every modified shade of sound answers to a force, that must be known to enable us to combine all these forces in accordance with their true laws.

'Composers work with substances of which they know nothing. Why should a brass and a wooden instrument — a bassoon and horn — have so little identity of tone, when they act on the same matter, the constituent gases of the air? Their differences proceed from some displacement of those constituents, from the way they act on the elements which are their affinity and which they return, modified by some occult and unknown process. If we knew what the process was, science and art would both be the gainers. Whatever extends science enhances art.

'Well, these are the discoveries I have guessed and made. Yes,' said Gambara, with increasing vehemence, 'hitherto men have noted effects rather than causes. If they could but master the causes, music would be the greatest of the arts. Is it not the one which strikes deepest to the soul? You see in painting no more than it shows you; in poetry you have only what the poet says; music goes far beyond this. Does it not form your taste, and rouse dormant memories? In a concert-room there may be a thousand souls; a strain is flung out from Pasta's throat, the execution worthily answering to the ideas that

flashed through Rossini's mind as he wrote the air. That phrase of Rossini's, transmitted to those attentive souls, is worked out in so many different poems. To one it presents a woman long dreamed of; to another, some distant shore where he wandered long ago. It rises up before him with its drooping willows, its clear waters, and the hopes that then played under its leafy arbours. One woman is reminded of the myriad feelings that tortured her during an hour of jealousy, while another thinks of the unsatisfied cravings of her heart, and paints in the glowing hues of a dream an ideal lover, to whom she abandons herself with the rapture of the woman in the Roman mosaic who embraces a chimera; yet a third is thinking that this very evening some hoped-for joy is to be hers, and rushes by anticipation into the tide of happiness, its dashing waves breaking against her burning bosom. Music alone has this power of throwing us back on ourselves; the other arts give us finite pleasure. But I am digressing.

'These were my first ideas, vague indeed; for an inventor at the beginning only catches glimpses of the dawn, as it were. So I kept these glorious ideas at the bottom of my knapsack, and they gave me spirit to eat the dry crust I often dipped in the water of a spring. I worked, I composed airs, and, after playing them on any instrument that came to hand, I went off again on foot across Italy. Finally, at the age of two and twenty, I settled in Venice, where for the first time I enjoyed rest and found myself in a decent position. I there made the acquaintance of a Venetian nobleman who liked my ideas, who encouraged me in my investigations, and who got me employment at the Venice theatre.

'Living was cheap, lodging inexpensive. I had a room in that Capello palace from which the famous Bianca came forth one evening to become a Grand Duchess of Tuscany. And I would dream that my unrecognised

fame would also emerge from thence one day to be crowned.

'I spent my evenings at the theatre and my days in work. Then came disaster. The performance of an opera in which I had experimented, trying my music, was a failure. No one understood my score for the *Martiri*. Set Beethoven before the Italians and they are out of their depth. No one had patience enough to wait for the effect to be produced by the different motives given out by each instrument, which were all at last to combine in a grand *ensemble*.

'I had built some hopes on the success of the *Martiri*, for we votaries of the blue divinity Hope always discount results. When a man believes himself destined to do great things, it is hard not to fancy them achieved; the bushel always has some cracks through which the light shines.

'My wife's family lodged in the same house, and the hope of winning Marianna, who often smiled at me from her window, had done much to encourage my efforts. I now fell into the deepest melancholy as I sounded the depths of the gulf I had dropped into; for I foresaw plainly a life of poverty, a perpetual struggle in which love must die. Marianna acted as genius does; she jumped across every obstacle, both feet at once. I will not speak of the little happiness which shed its gilding on the beginning of my misfortunes. Dismayed at my failure, I decided that Italy was not intelligent enough, and too much sunk in the dull round of routine to accept the innovations I conceived of; so I thought of going to Germany.

'I travelled thither by way of Hungary, listening to the myriad voices of nature, and trying to reproduce that sublime harmony by the help of instruments which I constructed or altered for the purpose. These experiments involved me in vast expenses which had soon exhausted my savings. And yet those were our golden days. In

Germany I was appreciated. There has been nothing in my life more glorious than that time. I can think of nothing to compare with the vehement joys I found by the side of Marianna, whose beauty was then of really heavenly radiance and splendour. In short, I was happy.

'During that period of weakness I more than once expressed my passion in the language of earthly harmony. I even wrote some of those airs, just like geometrical patterns, which are so much admired in the world of fashion that you move in. But as soon as I made a little way I met with insuperable obstacles raised by my rivals, all hypercritical or unappreciative.

'I had heard of France as being a country where novelties were favourably received, and I wanted to get there; my wife had a little money and we came to Paris. Till then no one had actually laughed in my face; but in this dreadful city I had to endure that new form of torture, to which abject poverty ere long added its bitter sufferings. Reduced to lodging in this mephitic quarter, for many months we have lived exclusively on Marianna's sewing, she having found employment for her needle in working for the unhappy prostitutes who make this street their hunting ground. Marianna assures me that among those poor creatures she has met with such consideration and generosity as I, for my part, ascribe to the ascendancy of virtue so pure that even vice is compelled to respect it.'

'Hope on,' said Andrea. 'Perhaps you have reached the end of your trials. And while waiting for the time when my endeavour, seconding yours, shall set your labours in a true light, allow me, as a fellow-countryman and an artist like yourself, to offer you some little advance on the undoubted success of your score.'

'All that has to do with matters of material existence I leave to my wife,' replied Gambara. 'She will decide as to what we may accept without a blush from so thorough a gentleman as you seem to be. For my part, — and it is

long since I have allowed myself to indulge such full confidences, — I must now ask you to allow me to leave you. I see a melody beckoning to me, dancing and floating before me, bare and quivering, like a girl entreating her lover for her clothes which he has hidden. Good-night. I must go and dress my mistress. My wife I leave with you.'

He hurried away, as a man who blames himself for the loss of valuable time; and Marianna, somewhat embarrassed, prepared to follow him.

Andrea dared not detain her.

Giardini came to the rescue.

'But you heard, Signora,' said he. 'Your husband has left you to settle some little matters with the Signor Conte.'

Marianna sat down again, but without raising her eyes to Andrea, who hesitated before speaking.

'And will not Signor Gambara's confidence entitle me to his wife's?' he said in agitated tones. 'Can the fair Marianna refuse to tell me the story of her life?'

'My life!' said Marianna. 'It is the life of the ivy. If you wish to know the story of my heart, you must suppose me equally destitute of pride and of modesty if you can ask me to tell it after what you have just heard.'

'Of whom, then, can I ask it?' cried the Count, in whom passion was blinding his wits.

'Of yourself,' replied Marianna. 'Either you understand me by this time, or you never will. Try to ask yourself.'

'I will, but you must listen. And this hand, which I am holding, is to lie in mine as long as my narrative is truthful.'

'I am listening,' said Marianna.

'A woman's life begins with her first passion,' said Andrea. 'And my dear Marianna began to live only on the day when she first saw Paolo Gambara. She needed some deep passion to feed upon, and, above all, some inter-

esting weakness to shelter and uphold. The beautiful woman's nature with which she is endowed is perhaps not so truly passion as maternal love.

'You sigh, Marianna? I have touched one of the aching wounds in your heart. It was a noble part for you to play, so young as you were, — that of protectress to a noble but wandering intellect. You said to yourself: "Paolo will be my genius; I shall be his common sense; between us we shall be that almost divine being called an angel, — the sublime creature that enjoys and understands, reason never stifling love."

'And then, in the first impetus of youth, you heard the thousand voices of nature which the poet longed to reproduce. Enthusiasm clutched you when Paolo spread before you the treasures of poetry, while seeking to embody them in the sublime but restricted language of music; you admired him when delirious rapture carried him up and away from you, for you liked to believe that all this devious energy would at last come down and alight as love. But you knew not the tyrannous and jealous despotism of the ideal over the minds that fall in love with it. Gambara, before meeting you, had given himself over to the haughty and overbearing mistress, with whom you have struggled for him to this day.

'Once, for an instant, you had a vision of happiness. Paolo, tumbling from the lofty sphere where his spirit was constantly soaring, was amazed to find reality so sweet; you fancied that his madness would be lulled in the arms of love. But before long Music again clutched her prey. The dazzling mirage which had cheated you into the joys of reciprocal love made the lonely path on which you had started look more desolate and barren.

'In the tale your husband has just told me, I could read, as plainly as in the contrast between your looks and his, all the painful secrets of that ill-assorted union, in which you have accepted the sufferer's part. Though your con-

duct has been unfailingly heroical, though your firmness has never once given way in the exercise of your painful duties, perhaps, in the silence of lonely nights, the heart that at this moment is beating so wildly in your breast, may, from time to time, have rebelled. Your husband's superiority was in itself your worst torment. If he had been less noble, less single-minded, you might have deserted him; but his virtues upheld yours; you wondered, perhaps, whether his heroism or your own would be the first to give way.

'You clung to your really magnanimous task as Paolo clung to his chimera. If you had had nothing but a devotion to duty to guide and sustain you, triumph might have seemed easier; you would only have had to crush your heart, and transfer your life into the world of abstractions; religion would have absorbed all else, and you would have lived for an idea, like those saintly women who kill all the instincts of nature at the foot of the altar. But the all-pervading charm of Paolo, the loftiness of his mind, his rare and touching proofs of tenderness, constantly drag you down from that ideal realm where virtue would fain maintain you; they perennially revive in you the energies you have exhausted in contending with the phantom of love. You never suspected this! The faintest glimmer of hope led you on in pursuit of the sweet vision.

'At last the disappointments of many years have undermined your patience, — an angel would have lost it long since, — and now the apparition so long pursued is no more than a shade without substance. Madness that is so nearly allied to genius can know no cure in this world. When this thought first struck you, you looked back on your past youth, sacrificed, if not wasted; you then bitterly discerned the blunder of nature that had given you a father when you looked for a husband. You asked yourself whether you had not gone beyond the duty of a wife in

keeping yourself wholly for a man who was bound up in his science. Marianna, leave your hand in mine; all I have said is true. And you looked about you — but now you were in Paris, not in Italy, where men know how to love ——'

'Oh! Let me finish the tale,' cried Marianna. 'I would rather say things myself. I will be honest; I feel that I am speaking to my truest friend. Yes, I was in Paris when all you have expressed so clearly took place in my mind; but when I saw you I was saved, for I had never met with the love I had dreamed of from my childhood. My poor dress and my dwelling-place had hidden me from the eyes of men of your class. A few young men, whose position did not allow of their insulting me, were all the more intolerable for the levity with which they treated me. Some made game of my husband, as if he were merely a ridiculous old man; others basely tried to win his good graces to betray him; one and all talked of getting me away from him, and none understood the devotion I feel for a soul that is so far away from us only because it is so near heaven, for that friend, that brother, whose handmaid I will always be.

'You alone understood, did you not? the tie that binds me to him. Tell me that you feel a sincere and disinterested regard for my Paolo ——'

'I gladly accept your praises,' Andrea interrupted; 'but go no further; do not compel me to contradict you. I love you, Marianna, as we love in the beautiful country where we both were born. I love you with all my soul and with all my strength; but before offering you that love, I will be worthy of yours. I will make a last attempt to give back to you the man you have loved so long and will love forever. Till success or defeat is certain, accept without any shame the modest ease I can give you both. We will go to-morrow and choose a place where he may live.

'Have you such regard for me as will allow you to make me the partner in your guardianship?'

Marianna, surprised at such magnanimity, held out her hand to the Count, who went away, trying to evade the civilities of Giardini and his wife.

On the following day Giardini took the Count up to the room where the Gambaras lodged. Though Marianna fully knew her lover's noble soul,—for there are natures which quickly enter into each other's spirit,—Marianna was too good a housewife not to betray her annoyance at receiving such a fine gentleman in so humble a room. Everything was exquisitely clean. She had spent the morning in dusting her motley furniture, the handiwork of Signor Giardini, who had put it together, at odd moments of leisure, out of the fragments of the instruments rejected by Gambara.

Andrea had never seen anything quite so crazy. To keep a decent countenance he turned away from a grotesque bed, contrived by the ingenious cook in the case of an old harpsichord, and looked at Marianna's narrow couch, of which the single mattress was covered with a white muslin counterpane, a circumstance that gave rise in his mind to some sad but sweet thoughts.

He wished to speak of his plans and of his morning's work; but Gambara, in his enthusiasm, believing that he had at last met with a willing listener, took possession of him, and compelled him to listen to the opera he had written for Paris.

'In the first place, Monsieur,' said the composer, 'allow me to explain the subject in a few words. Here, the hearers receiving a musical impression do not work it out in themselves, as religion bids us work out the texts of Scripture in prayer. Hence it is very difficult to make them understand that there is in nature an eternal melody, exquisitely sweet, a perfect harmony, disturbed only by revolutions

independent of the divine will, as passions are uncontrolled by the will of men.

'I, therefore, had to seek a vast framework in which effect and cause might both be included; for the aim of my music is to give a picture of the life of nations from the loftiest point of view. My opera, for which I myself wrote the *libretto*, for a poet would never have fully developed the subject, is the life of Mahomet, — a figure in whom the magic of Sabæanism combined with the Oriental poetry of the Hebrew Scriptures to result in one of the greatest human epics, the Arab dominion. Mahomet certainly derived from the Hebrews the idea of a despotic government, and from the religion of the shepherd tribes or Sabæans the spirit of expansion which created the splendid empire of the Khalifs. His destiny was stamped on him in his birth, for his father was a heathen and his mother a Jewess. Ah! my dear Count, to be a great musician a man must be very learned. Without knowledge he can get no local colour and put no ideas into his music. The composer who sings for singing's sake is an artisan, not an artist.

'This magnificent opera is the continuation of the great work I projected. My first opera was called *The Martyrs*, and I intend to write a third on Jerusalem delivered. You perceive the beauty of this trilogy and what a variety of motives it offers, — the Martyrs, Mahomet, the Deliverance of Jerusalem: the God of the West, the God of the East, and the struggle of their worshippers over a tomb. But we will not dwell on my fame, now for ever lost.

'This is the argument of my opera.' He paused. 'The first act,' he went on, 'shows Mahomet as a porter to Kadijah, a rich widow with whom his uncle placed him. He is in love and ambitious. Driven from Mecca, he escapes to Medina, and dates his era from his flight, the *Hegira*. In the second act he is a Prophet, founding a militant religion. In the third, disgusted with all things,

having exhausted life, Mahomet conceals the manner of his death in the hope of being regarded as a god, — last effort of human pride.

'Now you shall judge of my way of expressing in sound a great idea, for which poetry could find no adequate expression in words.'

Gambara sat down to the piano with an absorbed gaze, and his wife brought him the mass of papers forming his score; but he did not open them.

'The whole opera,' said he, 'is founded on a bass, as on a fruitful soil. Mahomet was to have a majestic bass voice, and his wife necessarily had a contralto. Kadijah was quite old — twenty! Attention! This is the overture. It begins with an *andante* in C major, triple time. Do you hear the sadness of the ambitious man who is not satisfied with love? Then, through his lamentation, by a transition to the key of E flat, *allegro*, common time, we hear the cries of the epileptic lover, his fury and certain warlike phrases, for the mighty scimitar of the Khalifs begins to gleam before him. The charms of the one and only woman give him the impulse to multiplied loves which strikes us in *Don Giovanni*. Now, as you hear these themes, do you not catch a glimpse of Mahomet's Paradise?

'And next we have a *cantabile* (A flat major, six-eight time), that might expand the soul that is least susceptible to music. Kadijah has understood Mahomet! Then Kadijah announces to the populace the Prophet's interviews with the Angel Gabriel (*maestoso sostenuto* in F major). The magistrates and priests, power and religion, feeling themselves attacked by the innovator, as Christ and Socrates also attacked effete or worn-out powers and religions, persecute Mahomet and drive him out of Mecca (*stretto* in C major). Then comes my beautiful dominant (G major, common time). Arabia now hearkens to the Prophet; horsemen arrive (G major, E flat, B flat, G

minor, and still common time). The mass of men gathers like an avalanche; the false Prophet has begun on a tribe the work he will achieve over a world (G major).

'He promises the Arabs universal dominion, and they believe him because he is inspired. The *crescendo* begins (still in the dominant). Here come some flourishes (in C major) from the brass, founded on the harmony, but strongly marked, and asserting themselves as an expression of the first triumphs. Medina has gone over to the Prophet, and the whole army marches on Mecca (an explosion of sound in C major). The whole power of the orchestra is worked up like a conflagration; every instrument is employed; it is a torrent of harmony.

'Suddenly the *tutti* is interrupted by a flowing air (on the minor third). You hear the last strain of devoted love. The woman who had upheld the great man dies concealing her despair, dies at the moment of triumph for him in whom love has become too overbearing to be content with one woman; and she worships him enough to sacrifice herself to the greatness of the man who is killing her. What a blaze of love!

'Then the Desert rises to overrun the world (back to C major). The whole strength of the orchestra comes in again, collected in a tremendous quintett grounded on the fundamental bass, — and he is dying! Mahomet is world-weary; he has exhausted everything. Now he craves to die a god. Arabia, in fact, worships and prays to him, and we return to the first melancholy strain (C minor) to which the curtain rose.

'Now, do you not discern,' said Gambara, ceasing to play, and turning to the Count, 'in this picturesque and vivid music — abrupt, grotesque, or melancholy, but always grand — the complete expression of the life of an epileptic, mad for enjoyment, unable to read or write, using all his defects as stepping-stones, turning every blunder and disaster into a triumph? Did not you feel a sense of his

fascination exerted over a greedy and lustful race, in this overture, which is an epitome of the opera?'

At first calm and stern, the maestro's face, in which Andrea had been trying to read the ideas he was uttering in inspired tones, though the chaotic flood of notes afforded no clue to them, had by degrees glowed with fire and assumed an impassioned force that infected Marianna and the cook. Marianna, too, deeply affected by certain passages in which she recognised a picture of her own position, could not conceal the expression of her eyes from Andrea.

Gambara wiped his brow, and shot a glance at the ceiling of such fierce energy that he seemed to pierce it and soar to the very skies.

'You have seen the vestibule,' said he; 'we will now enter the palace. The opera begins: —

'Act I. Mahomet, alone on the stage, begins with an air (F natural, common time), interrupted by a chorus of camel-drivers gathered round a well at the back of the stage (they sing in contrary time — twelve-eight). What majestic woe! It will appeal to the most frivolous women, piercing to their inmost nerves if they have no heart. Is not this the very expression of crushed genius?'

To Andrea's great astonishment, — for Marianna was accustomed to it, — Gambara contracted his larynx to such a pitch that the only sound was a stifled cry not unlike the bark of a watch-dog that has lost its voice. A slight foam came to the composer's lips and made Andrea shudder.

'His wife appears (A minor). Such a magnificent duet! In this number I have shown that Mahomet has the will and his wife the brains. Kadijah announces that she is about to devote herself to an enterprise that will rob her of her young husband's love. Mahomet means to conquer the world; this his wife has guessed, and she supports him by persuading the people of Mecca that her husband's attacks of epilepsy are the effect of his intercourse with

the angels (chorus of the first followers of Mahomet, who come to promise him their aid, C sharp minor, *sotto voce*). Mahomet goes off to seek the Angel Gabriel (*recitative* in F major). His wife encourages the disciples (*aria*, interrupted by the chorus; gusts of chanting support Kadijah's broad and majestic air, A major).

'Abdallah, the father of Ayesha, — the only maiden Mahomet had found really innocent, wherefore he changed the name of Abdallah to Abubekir (the father of the virgin), — comes forward with Ayesha and sings against the chorus, in strains which rise above the other voices and supplement the air sung by Kadijah in contrapuntal treatment. Omar, the father of another maiden who is to be Mahomet's concubine, follows Abubekir's example; he and his daughter join in to form a quintett. The girl Ayesha is first soprano, Hafsa second soprano; Abubekir is a bass, Omar a baritone.

'Mahomet returns, inspired. He sings his first *bravura* air, the beginning of the *finale* (E major), promising the empire of the world to those who believe in him. The Prophet, seeing the two damsels, then, by a gentle transition (from B major to G major), addresses them in amorous tones. Ali, Mahomet's cousin, and Khaled, his greatest general, both tenors, now arrive and announce the persecution; the magistrates, the military, and the authorities have all proscribed the Prophet (*recitative*). Mahomet declares in an invocation (in C) that the Angel Gabriel is on his side, and points to a pigeon that is seen flying away. The chorus of believers responds in accents of devotion (on a modulation to B major). The soldiers, magistrates, and officials then come on (*tempo di marcia*, common time, B major). A chorus in two divisions (*stretto* in E major). Mahomet yields to the storm (in a descending phrase of diminished sevenths) and makes his escape. The fierce and gloomy tone of this *finale* is relieved by the phrases given to the three women who fore-

tell Mahomet's triumph, and these motives are further developed in the third act in the scene where Mahomet is enjoying his splendour.'

The tears rose to Gambara's eyes, and it was only upon controlling his emotion that he went on.

'Act II. The religion is now established. The Arabs are guarding the Prophet's tent while he speaks with God (chorus in A minor). Mahomet appears (a prayer in F). What a majestic and noble strain is this that forms the bass of the voices, in which I have perhaps enlarged the borders of melody. It was needful to express the wonderful energy of this great human movement which created an architecture, a music, a poetry of its own, a costume and manners. As you listen, you are walking under the arcades of the Generalife, the carved vaults of the Alhambra. The runs and trills depict that delicate mauresque decoration, and the gallant and valorous religion which was destined to wage war against the gallant and valorous chivalry of Christendom. A few brass instruments awake in the orchestra, announcing the Prophet's first triumph (in a broken *cadenza*). The Arabs adore the Prophet (E flat major), and Khaled, Amru, and Ali arrive (*tempo di marcia*). The armies of the faithful have taken many towns and subjugated the three Arabias. Such a grand recitative! — Mahomet rewards his generals by presenting them with maidens.

'And here,' said Gambara, sadly, 'there is one of those wretched ballets, which interrupt the thread of the finest musical tragedies! But Mahomet elevates it once more by his great prophetic scene, which poor Monsieur Voltaire begins with these words: —

"Arabia's time at last has come!"

'He is interrupted by a chorus of triumphant Arabs (twelve-eight time, *accelerando*). The tribes arrive in crowds; the horns and brass reappear in the orchestra.

General rejoicings ensue, all the voices joining in by degrees, and Mahomet announces polygamy. In the midst of all this triumph, the woman who has been of such faithful service to Mahomet sings a magnificent air (in B major). "And I," says she, "am I no longer loved?" "We must part. Thou art but a woman, and I am a Prophet; I may still have slaves but no equal." Just listen to this duet (G sharp minor). What anguish! The woman understands the greatness her hands have built up; she loves Mahomet well enough to sacrifice herself to his glory; she worships him as a god, without criticising him,—without murmuring. Poor woman! His first dupe and his first victim!

'What a subject for the *finale* (in B major) is her grief, brought out in such sombre hues against the acclamations of the chorus, and mingling with Mahomet's tones as he throws his wife aside as a tool of no further use, still showing her that he can never forget her! What fireworks of triumph! what a rush of glad and rippling song go up from the two young voices (first and second soprano) of Ayesha and Hafsa, supported by Ali and his wife, by Omar and Abubekir! Weep!—rejoice!—Triumph and tears! Such is life.'

Marianna could not control her tears, and Andrea was so deeply moved that his eyes were moist. The Neapolitan cook was startled by the magnetic influence of the ideas expressed by Gambara's convulsive accents.

The composer looked round, saw the group, and smiled.

'At last you understand me!' said he.

No conqueror, led in pomp to the Capitol under the purple beams of glory, as the crown was placed on his head amid the acclamations of a nation, ever wore such an expression. The composer's face was radiant, like that of a holy martyr. No one dispelled the error. A terrible smile parted Marianna's lips. The Count was appalled by the guilelessness of this mania.

'Act III,' said the enchanted musician, reseating himself at the piano. '(*Andantino*, solo). Mahomet in his seraglio, surrounded by women, but not happy. Quartette of Houris (A major). What pompous harmony, what trills as of ecstatic nightingales! Modulation (into F sharp minor). The theme is stated (on the dominant E and repeated in F major). Here every delight is grouped and expressed to give effect to the contrast of the gloomy *finale* of the first act. After the dancing, Mahomet rises and sings a grand *bravura* air (in F minor), repelling the perfect and devoted love of his first wife, but confessing himself conquered by polygamy. Never has a musician had so fine a subject! The orchestra and the chorus of female voices express the joys of the Houris, while Mahomet reverts to the melancholy strain of the opening. Where is Beethoven,' cried Gambara, 'to appreciate this prodigious reaction of my opera on itself? How completely it all rests on the bass.

'It is thus that Beethoven composed his E minor symphony. But his heroic work is purely instrumental, whereas here, my heroic phrase is worked out on a sextett of the finest human voices, and a chorus of the faithful on guard at the door of the sacred dwelling. I have every resource of melody and harmony at my command, an orchestra and voices. Listen to the utterance of all these phases of human life, rich and poor; — battle, triumph, and exhaustion!

'Ali arrives, the Koran prevails in every province (duet in D minor). Mahomet places himself in the hands of his two fathers-in-law; he will abdicate his rule and die in retirement to consolidate his work. A magnificent sextett (B flat major). He takes leave of all (solo in F natural). His two fathers-in-law, constituted his vicars or Khalifs, appeal to the people. A great triumphal march, and a prayer by all the Arabs kneeling before the sacred house, the Kasbah, from which a pigeon is seen to fly away (the

same key). This prayer, sung by sixty voices and led by the women (in B flat), crowns the stupendous work expressive of the life of nations and of man. Here you have every emotion, human and divine.'

Andrea gazed at Gambara in blank amazement. Though at first he had been struck by the terrible irony of the situation, — this man expressing the feelings of Mahomet's wife without discovering them in Marianna, — the husband's hallucination was as nothing compared with the composer's. There was no hint even of a poetical or musical idea in the hideous cacophony with which he had deluged their ears; the first principles of harmony, the most elementary rules of composition, were absolutely alien to this chaotic structure. Instead of the scientifically compacted music which Gambara described, his fingers produced sequences of fifths, sevenths, and octaves, of major thirds, progressions of fourths with no supporting bass, — a medley of discordant sounds struck out haphazard in such a way as to be excruciating to the least sensitive ear. It is difficult to give any idea of the grotesque performance. New words would be needed to describe this impossible music.

Andrea, painfully affected by this worthy man's madness, coloured, and stole a glance at Marianna; while she, turning pale and looking down, could not restrain her tears. In the midst of this chaos of notes, Gambara had every now and then given vent to his rapture in exclamations of delight. He had closed his eyes in ecstasy; had smiled at his piano; had looked at it with a frown; put out his tongue at it after the fashion of the inspired performer, — in short, was quite intoxicated with the poetry that filled his brain, and that he had vainly striven to utter. The strange discords that clashed under his fingers had obviously sounded in his ears like celestial harmonies.

A deaf man, seeing the inspired gaze of his blue eyes open on another world, the rosy glow that tinged his cheeks, and, above all, the heavenly serenity which ecstasy stamped on his proud and noble countenance, would have supposed that he was looking on at the improvisation of a really great artist. The illusion would have been all the more natural because the performance of this mad music required immense executive skill to achieve such fingering. Gambara must have worked at it for years.

Nor were his hands alone employed; his feet were constantly at work with complicated pedalling; his body swayed to and fro; the perspiration poured down his face while he toiled to produce a great *crescendo* with the feeble means the thankless instrument placed at his command. He stamped, puffed, shouted; his fingers were as swift as the serpent's double tongue; and finally, at the last crash on the keys, he fell back in his chair, resting his head on the top of it.

'*Per Bacco!* I am quite stunned,' said the Count as he left the house. 'A child dancing on the keyboard would make better music.'

'Certainly mere chance could not more successfully avoid hitting two notes in concord than that possessed creature has done during the past hour,' said Giardini.

'How is it that the regular beauty of Marianna's features is not spoiled by incessantly hearing such a hideous medley?' said the Count to himself. 'Marianna will certainly grow ugly.'

'Signor, she must be saved from that,' cried Giardini.

'Yes,' said Andrea. 'I have thought of that. Still, to be sure that my plans are not based on error, I must confirm my doubts by another experiment. I will return and examine the instruments he has invented. To-morrow, after dinner, we will have a little supper. I will send in some wine and little dishes.'

The cook bowed.

Andrea spent the following day in superintending the arrangement of the rooms where he meant to install the artist in a humble home.

In the evening the Count made his appearance, and found the wine, according to his instructions, set out with some care by Marianna and Giardini. Gambara proudly exhibited the little drums, on which lay the powder by means of which he made his observations on the pitch and quality of the sounds emitted by his instruments.

'You see,' said he, 'by what simple means I can prove the most important propositions. Acoustics thus can show me the analogous effects of sound on every object of its impact. All harmonies start from a common centre and preserve the closest relations among themselves; or rather, harmony, like light, is decomposable by our art as a ray is by a prism.'

He then displayed the instruments constructed in accordance with his laws, explaining the changes he had introduced into their constitution. And finally he announced that to conclude this preliminary inspection, which could only satisfy a superficial curiosity, he would perform on an instrument that contained all the elements of a complete orchestra, and which he called a *Panharmonicon*.

'If it is the machine in that huge case, which brings down on us the complaints of the neighbourhood whenever you work at it, you will not play on it long,' said Giardini. 'The police will interfere. Remember that!'

'If that poor idiot stays in the room,' said Gambara in a whisper to the Count, 'I cannot possibly play.'

Andrea dismissed the cook, promising a handsome reward if he would keep watch outside and hinder the neighbours or the police from interfering. Giardini, who had not stinted himself while helping Gambara to wine, was quite willing.

Gambara, without being drunk, was in the condition when every power of the brain is over-wrought; when the walls of the room are transparent; when the garret has no roof, and the soul soars in the empyrean of spirits.

Marianna, with some little difficulty, removed the covers from an instrument as large as a grand piano, but with an upper case added. This strange-looking instrument, besides this second body and its keyboard, supported the openings or bells of various wind instruments and the closed funnels of a few organ pipes.

'Will you play me the prayer you say is so fine at the end of your opera?' said the Count.

To the great surprise of both Marianna and the Count, Gambara began with a succession of chords that proclaimed him a master; and their astonishment gave way first to amazed admiration and then to perfect rapture, effacing all thought of the place and the performer. The effects of a real orchestra could not have been finer than the voices of the wind instruments, which were like those of an organ and combined wonderfully with the harmonies of the strings. But the unfinished condition of the machine set limits to the composer's execution, and his idea seemed all the greater; for, often, the very perfection of a work of art limits its suggestiveness to the recipient soul. Is not this proved by the preference accorded to a sketch rather than a finished picture when on their trial before those who interpret a work in their own mind rather than accept it rounded off and complete?

The purest and serenest music that Andrea had ever listened to rose up from under Gambara's fingers like the vapour of incense from an altar. The composer's voice grew young again, and, far from marring the noble melody, it elucidated it, supported it, guided it,—just as the feeble and quavering voice of an accomplished reader, such as Andrieux, for instance, can expand the meaning of some great scene by Corneille or Racine by lending personal and poetical feeling.

This really angelic strain showed what treasures lay hidden in that stupendous opera, which, however, would never find comprehension so long as the musician persisted

in trying to explain it in his present demented state. His wife and the Count were equally divided between the music and their surprise at this hundred-voiced instrument, inside which a stranger might have fancied an invisible chorus of girls were hidden, so closely did some of the tones resemble the human voice; and they dared not express their ideas by a look or a word. Marianna's face was lighted up by a radiant beam of hope which revived the glories of her youth. This renascence of beauty, co-existent with the luminous glow of her husband's genius, cast a shade of regret on the Count's exquisite pleasure in this mysterious hour.

'You are our good genius!' whispered Marianna. 'I am tempted to believe that you actually inspire him; for I, who never am away from him, have never heard anything like this.'

'And Kadijah's farewell!' cried Gambara, who sang the *cavatina* which he had described the day before as sublime, and which now brought tears to the eyes of the lovers, so perfectly did it express the loftiest devotion of love.

'Who can have taught you such strains?' cried the Count.

'The Spirit,' said Gambara. 'When he appears, all is fire. I see the melodies there before me; lovely, fresh in vivid hues like flowers. They beam on me, they ring out,— and I listen. But it takes a long, long time to reproduce them.'

'Some more!' said Marianna.

Gambara, who could not tire, played on without effort or antics. He performed his overture with such skill, bringing out such rich and original musical effects, that the Count was quite dazzled, and at last believed in some magic like that commanded by Paganini and Liszt,—a style of execution which changes every aspect of music as an art, by giving it a poetic quality far above musical inventions.

'Well, Excellenza, and can you cure him?' asked Giardini, as Andrea came out.

'I shall soon find out,' replied the Count. 'This man's intellect has two windows; one is closed to the world, the other is open to the heavens. The first is music, the second is poetry. Till now he has insisted on sitting in front of the shuttered window; he must be got to the other. It was you, Giardini, who first started me in the right track, by telling me that your client's mind was clearer after drinking a few glasses of wine.'

'Yes,' cried the cook, 'and I can see what your plan is.'

'If it is not too late to make the thunder of poetry audible to his ears, in the midst of the harmonies of some noble music, we must put him into a condition to receive it and appreciate it. Will you help me to intoxicate Gambara, my good fellow? Will you be none the worse for it?'

'What do you mean, Excellenza?'

Andrea went off without answering him, laughing at the acumen still left to this cracked wit.

On the following day he called for Marianna, who had spent the morning in arranging her dress, — a simple but decent outfit, on which she had spent all her little savings. The transformation would have destroyed the illusions of a mere dangler; but Andrea's caprice had become a passion. Marianna, diverted of her picturesque poverty, and looking like any ordinary woman of modest rank, inspired dreams of wedded life.

He handed her into a hackney coach, and told her of the plans he had in his head; and she approved of everything, happy in finding her admirer more lofty, more generous, more disinterested than she had dared to hope. He took her to a little apartment, where he had allowed himself to remind her of his good offices by some of the elegant trifles which have a charm for the most virtuous women.

'I will never speak to you of love till you give up all hope of your Paolo,' said the Count to Marianna, as he bid

her good-bye at the Rue Froid-Manteau. 'You will be witness to the sincerity of my attempts. If they succeed, I may find myself unequal to keeping up my part as a friend; but in that case I shall go far away, Marianna. Though I have firmness enough to work for your happiness, I shall not have so much as will enable me to look on at it.'

'Do not say such things. Generosity, too, has its dangers,' said she, swallowing down her tears. 'But are you going now?'

'Yes,' said Andrea; 'be happy, without any drawbacks.'

If Giardini might be believed, the new treatment was beneficial to both husband and wife. Every evening after his wine, Gambara seemed less self-centred, talked more, and with great lucidity; he even spoke at last of reading the papers. Andrea could not help quaking at his unexpectedly rapid success; but though his distress made him aware of the strength of his passion, it did not make him waver in his virtuous resolve.

One day he called to note the progress of this singular cure. Though the state of the patient at first gave him satisfaction, his joy was dashed by Marianna's beauty, for an easy life had restored its brilliancy. He called now every evening to enjoy calm and serious conversation, to which he contributed lucid and well considered arguments controverting Gambara's singular theories. He took advantage of the remarkable acumen of the composer's mind as to every point not too directly bearing on his manias, to obtain his assent to principles in various branches of art, and apply them subsequently to music. All was well so long as the patient's brain was heated with the fumes of wine; but as soon as he had recovered — or, rather, lost — his reason, he was a monomaniac once more.

However, Paolo was already more easily diverted by the

impression of outside things; his mind was more capable of addressing itself to several points at a time.

Andrea, who took an artistic interest in his semi-medical treatment, thought at last that the time had come for a great experiment. He would give a dinner at his own house, to which he would invite Giardini for the sake of keeping the tragedy and the parody side by side, and afterwards take the party to the first performance of *Robert le Diable*. He had seen it in rehearsal, and he judged it well fitted to open his patient's eyes.

By the end of the second course, Gambara was already tipsy, laughing at himself with a very good grace; while Giardini confessed that his own culinary innovations were not worth a rush. Andrea had neglected nothing that could contribute to this twofold miracle. The wines of Orvieto and of Montefiascone, conveyed with the peculiar care needed in moving them, Lachrymachristi and Giro, — all the heady liqueurs of *la cara Patria*, — went to their brains with the intoxication alike of the grape and of fond memory. At dessert the musician and the cook both abjured every heresy; one was humming a *cavatina* by Rossini, and the other piling delicacies on his plate and washing them down with Maraschino from Zara, to the prosperity of the French *cuisine*.

The Count took advantage of this happy frame of mind, and Gambara allowed himself to be taken to the opera like a lamb.

At the first introductory notes Gambara's intoxication appeared to clear away and make way for the feverish excitement which sometimes brought his judgment and his imagination into perfect harmony; for it was their habitual disagreement, no doubt, that caused his madness. The ruling idea of that great musical drama appeared to him, no doubt, in its noble simplicity, like a lightning flash, illuminating the utter darkness in which he lived. To his unsealed eyes this music revealed the immense horizons

of a world in which he found himself for the first time, though recognising it as that he had seen in his dreams. He fancied himself transported into the scenery of his native land, where that beautiful Italian landscape begins at what Napoleon so cleverly described as the *glacis* of the Alps. Carried back by memory to the time when his young and eager brain was as yet untroubled by the ecstasy of his too exuberant imagination, he listened with religious awe and would not utter a single word. The Count respected the internal travail of his soul. Till half-past twelve Gambara sat so perfectly motionless that the frequenters of the opera house took him, no doubt, for what he was — a man drunk.

On their return, Andrea began to attack Meyerbeer's work, in order to wake up Gambara, who sat sunk in the half-torpid state common in drunkards.

'What is there in that incoherent score to reduce you to a condition of somnambulism?' asked Andrea, when they got out at his house. 'The story of *Robert le Diable*, to be sure, is not devoid of interest, and Holtei has worked it out with great skill in a drama that is very well written and full of strong and pathetic situations; but the French librettist has contrived to extract from it the most ridiculous farrago of nonsense. The absurdities of the libretti of Vesari and Schikander are not to compare with those of the words of Robert le Diable; it is a dramatic nightmare, which oppresses the hearer without deeply moving him.

'And Meyerbeer has given the devil a too prominent part. Bertram and Alice represent the contest between right and wrong, the spirits of good and evil. This antagonism offered a splendid opportunity to the composer. The sweetest melodies, in juxtaposition with harsh and crude strains, was the natural outcome of the form of the story; but in the German composer's score the demons sing better than the saints. The heavenly airs belie their

origin, and when the composer abandons the infernal motives he returns to them as soon as possible, fatigued with the effort of keeping aloof from them. Melody, the golden thread that ought never to be lost throughout so vast a plan, often vanishes from Meyerbeer's work. Feeling counts for nothing, the heart has no part in it. Hence we never come upon those happy inventions, those artless scenes, which captivate all our sympathies and leave a blissful impression on the soul.

'Harmony reigns supreme, instead of being the foundation from which the melodic groups of the musical picture stand forth. These discordant combinations, far from moving the listener, arouse in him a feeling analogous to that which he would experience on seeing a rope-dancer hanging to a thread and swaying between life and death. Never does a soothing strain come in to mitigate the fatiguing suspense. It really is as though the composer had had no other object in view than to produce a baroque effect without troubling himself about musical truth or unity, or about the capabilities of human voices which are swamped by this flood of instrumental noise.'

'Silence, my friend!' cried Gambara. 'I am still under the spell of that glorious chorus of hell, made still more terrible by the long trumpets, — a new method of instrumentation. The broken *cadenzas* which give such force to Robert's scene, the *cavatina* in the fourth act, the *finale* of the first, all hold me in the grip of a supernatural power. No, not even Gluck's declamation ever produced so prodigious an effect, and I am amazed by such skill and learning.'

'Signor Maestro,' said Andrea, smiling, 'allow me to contradict you. Gluck, before he wrote, reflected long; he calculated the chances, and he decided on a plan which might be subsequently modified by his inspirations as to detail, but hindered him from ever losing his way. Hence his power of emphasis, his declamatory style thrilling with

life and truth. I quite agree with you that Meyerbeer's learning is transcendent; but science is a defect when it evicts inspiration, and it seems to me that we have in this opera the painful toil of a refined craftsman who in his music has but picked up thousands of phrases out of other operas, damned or forgotten, and appropriated them, while extending, modifying, or condensing them. But he has fallen into the error of all selectors of *centos*, — an abuse of good things. This clever harvester of notes is lavish of discords, which, when too often introduced, fatigue the ear till those great effects pall upon it which a composer should husband with care to make the more effective use of them when the situation requires it. These enharmonic passages recur to satiety, and the abuse of the plagal cadence deprives it of its religious solemnity.

'I know, of course, that every musician has certain forms to which he drifts back in spite of himself; he should watch himself so as to avoid that blunder. A picture in which there were no colours but blue and red would be untrue to nature, and fatigue the eye. And thus the constantly recurring rhythm in the score of *Robert le Diable* makes the work, as a whole, appear monotonous. As to the effect of the long trumpets, of which you speak, it has long been known in Germany; and what Meyerbeer offers us as a novelty was constantly used by Mozart, who gives just such a chorus to the devils in *Don Giovanni*.'

By plying Gambara, meanwhile, with fresh libations, Andrea thus strove, by his contradictoriness, to bring the musician back to a true sense of music, by proving to him that his so-called mission was not to try to regenerate an art beyond his powers, but to seek to express himself in another form; namely, that of poetry.

'But, my dear Count, you have understood nothing of that stupendous musical drama,' said Gambara, airily, as standing in front of Andrea's piano he struck the keys,

listened to the tone, and then seated himself, meditating for a few minutes as if to collect his ideas.

'To begin with, you must know,' said he, 'that an ear as practised as mine at once detected that labour of choice and setting of which you spoke. Yes, the music has been selected, lovingly, from the storehouse of a rich and fertile imagination wherein learning has squeezed every idea to extract the very essence of music. I will illustrate the process.'

He rose to carry the candles into the adjoining room, and before sitting down again he drank a full glass of Giro, a Sardinian wine, as full of fire as the old wines of Tokay can inspire.

'Now, you see,' said Gambara, 'this music is not written for misbelievers, nor for those who know not love. If you have never suffered from the virulent attacks of an evil spirit who shifts your object just as you are taking aim, who puts a fatal end to your highest hopes, — in one word, if you have never felt the devil's tail whisking over the world, the opera of *Robert le Diable* must be to you, what the Apocalypse is to those who believe that all things will end with them. But if, persecuted and wretched, you understand that Spirit of Evil, — the monstrous ape who is perpetually employed in destroying the work of God, — if you can conceive of him as having, not indeed loved, but ravished, an almost divine woman, and achieved through her the joy of paternity; as so loving his son that he would rather have him eternally miserable with himself than think of him as eternally happy with God; if, finally, you can imagine the mother's soul for ever hovering over the child's head to snatch it from the atrocious temptations offered by its father, — even then you will have but a faint idea of this stupendous drama, which needs but little to make it worthy of comparison with Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. *Don Giovanni* is in its perfection the greater, I grant; *Robert le Diable* expresses ideas, *Don Giovanni* arouses sensations.

Don Giovanni is as yet the only musical work in which harmony and melody are combined in exactly the right proportions. In this lies its only superiority, for *Robert* is the richer work. But how vain are such comparisons since each is so beautiful in its own way!

'To me, suffering as I do from the demon's repeated shocks, Robert spoke with greater power than to you; it struck me as being at the same time vast and concentrated.

'Thanks to you, I have been transported to the glorious land of dreams where our senses expand, and the world works on a scale which is gigantic as compared with man.'

He was silent for a space.

'I am trembling still,' said the ill-starred artist, 'from the four bars of cymbals which pierced to my marrow as they open that short, abrupt introduction with its solo for trombone, its flutes, oboes, and clarionet, all suggesting the most fantastic effects of colour. The *andante* in C minor is a foretaste of the subject of the evocation of the ghosts in the abbey, and gives grandeur to the scene by anticipating the spiritual struggle. I shivered.'

Gambara pressed the keys with a firm hand and expanded Meyerbeer's theme in a masterly *fantasia*, a sort of outpouring of his soul after the manner of Liszt. It was no longer the piano, it was a whole orchestra that they heard; the very genius of music rose before them.

'That is worthy of Mozart!' he exclaimed. 'See how that German can handle his chords, and through what masterly modulations he raises the image of terror to come to the dominant C. I can hear all hell in it!

'The curtain rises. What do I see? The only scene to which we gave the epithet infernal: an orgy of knights in Sicily. In that chorus in F every human passion is unchained in a bacchanalian *allegro*. Every thread by which the devil holds us is pulled. Yes, that is the sort of glee that comes over men when they dance on the edge

of a precipice; they make themselves giddy. What *go* there is in that chorus!

'Against that chorus — the reality of life — the simple life of every-day virtue stands out in the air, in G minor, sung by Raimbaut. For a moment it refreshed my spirit to hear the simple fellow, representative of verdurous and fruitful Normandy, which he brings to Robert's mind in the midst of his drunkenness. The sweet influence of his beloved native land lends a touch of tender colour to this gloomy opening.

'Then comes the wonderful air in C major, supported by the chorus in C minor, so expressive of the subject. "*Je suis Robert!*" he immediately breaks out. The wrath of the prince, insulted by his vassal, is already more than natural anger; but it will die away, for memories of his childhood come to him, with Alice, in the bright and graceful *allegro* in A major.

'Can you not hear the cries of the innocent dragged into this infernal drama, — a persecuted creature? "*Non, non*," sang Gambara, who made the consumptive piano sing. His native land and tender emotions have come back to him; his childhood and its memories have blossomed anew in Robert's heart. And now his mother's shade rises up, bringing with it soothing religious thoughts. It is religion that lives in that beautiful song in E major, with its wonderful harmonic and melodic progression in the words: —

"Car dans les cieux, comme sur la terre,
Sa mère va prier pour lui."

'Here the struggle begins between the unseen powers and the only human being who has the fire of hell in his veins to enable him to resist them; and to make this quite clear, as Bertram comes on, the great musician has given the orchestra a passage introducing a reminiscence

of Raimbaut's ballad. What a stroke of art! What cohesion of all the parts! What solidity of structure!

'The devil is there, in hiding, but restless. The conflict of the antagonistic powers opens with Alice's terror; she recognizes the devil of the image of Saint Michael in her village. The musical subject is worked out through an endless variety of phases. The antithesis indispensable in opera is emphatically presented in a noble *recitative*, such as a Gluck might have composed, between Bertram and Robert:—

"Tu ne sauras jamais à quel excès je t'aime."

In that diabolical C minor, Bertram, with his terrible bass, begins his work of undermining which will overthrow every effort of the vehement, passionate man.

'Here, everything is appalling. Will the crime get possession of the criminal? Will the executioner seize his victim? Will sorrow consume the artist's genius? Will the disease kill the patient? or, will the guardian angel save the Christian?

'Then comes the *finale*, the gambling scene in which Bertram tortures his son by rousing him to tremendous emotions. Robert, beggared, frenzied, searching everything, eager for blood, fire, and sword, is his own son; in this mood he is exactly like his father. What hideous glee we hear in Bertram's words: "*Je ris de tes coups!*" And how perfectly the Venetian *barcarole* comes in here. Through what wondrous transitions the diabolical parent is brought on to the stage once more to make Robert throw the dice.

'This first act is overwhelming to any one capable of working out the subjects in his very heart, and lending them the breadth of development which the composer intended them to call forth.

'Nothing but love could now be contrasted with this

noble symphony of song, in which you will detect no monotony, no repetition of means and effects. It is one, but many; the characteristic of all that is truly great and natural.

'I breathe more freely; I find myself in the elegant circle of a gallant court; I hear Isabella's charming phrases, fresh, but almost melancholy, and the female chorus in two divisions, and in *imitation*, with a suggestion of the Moorish colouring of Spain. Here the terrifying music is softened to gentler hues, like a storm dying away, and ends in the florid prettiness of a duet wholly unlike anything that has come before it. After the turmoil of a camp full of errant heroes, we have a picture of love. Poet! I thank thee! My heart could not have borne much more. If I could not here and there pluck the daisies of a French light opera, if I could not hear the gentle wit of a woman able to love and to charm, I could not endure the terrible deep note on which Bertram comes in, saying to his son: "*Si je le permets!*" when Robert has promised the princess he adores that he will conquer with the arms she has bestowed on him.

'The hopes of the gambler cured by love, the love of a most beautiful woman, — did you observe that magnificent Sicilian, with her hawk's eye secure of her prey? (What interpreters that composer has found!) the hopes of the man are mocked at by the hopes of hell in the tremendous cry: "*A toi, Robert de Normandie!*"

'And are not you struck by the gloom and horror of those long-held notes, to which the words are set: "*Dans la forêt prochaine*"? We find here all the sinister spells of *Jerusalem Delivered*, just as we find all chivalry in the chorus with the Spanish lilt, and in the march tune. How original is the *allegro* with the modulations of the four cymbals (tuned to C, D, C, G)! How elegant is the call to the lists! The whole movement of the heroic life of the period is there; the mind enters into it; I read in it a romance, a poem of

chivalry. The *exposition* is now finished; the resources of music would seem to be exhausted; you have never heard anything like it before; and yet it is homogeneous. You have had life set before you, and its one and only *crux:* "Shall I be happy or unhappy?" is the philosopher's query. "Shall I be saved or damned?" asks the Christian.'

With these words Gambara struck the last chord of the chorus, dwelt on it with a melancholy modulation, and then rose to drink another large glass of Giro. This half-African vintage gave his face a deeper flush, for his passionate and wonderful sketch of Meyerbeer's opera had made him turn a little pale.

'That nothing may be lacking to this composition,' he went on, 'the great artist has generously added the only *buffo* duet permissible for a devil: that in which he tempts the unhappy troubadour. The composer has set jocosity side by side with horror — a jocosity in which he mocks at the only realism he had allowed himself amid the sublime imaginings of his work — the pure calm love of Alice and Raimbaut; and their life is overshadowed by the forecast of evil.

'None but a lofty soul can feel the noble style of these *buffo* airs; they have neither the superabundant frivolity of Italian music nor the vulgar accent of French commonplace; rather have they the majesty of Olympus. There is the bitter laughter of a divine being mocking the surprise of a troubadour Don-Juanising himself. But for this dignity we should be too suddenly brought down to the general tone of the opera, here stamped on that terrible fury of diminished sevenths which resolves itself into an infernal waltz, and finally brings us face to face with the demons.

'How emphatically Bertram's couplet stands out in B minor against that diabolical chorus, depicting his paternity, but mingling in fearful despair with these demoniacal strains.

'Then comes the delightful transition of Alice's reappearance, with the *ritornel* in B flat. I can still hear that

air of angelical simplicity — the nightingale after a storm. Thus the grand leading idea of the whole is worked out in the details; for what could be more perfectly in contrast with the tumult of devils tossing in the pit than that wonderful air given to Alice? "*Quand j'ai quitté la Normandie.*"

'The golden thread of melody flows on, side by side with the mighty harmony, like a heavenly hope; it is embroidered on it, and with what marvellous skill! Genius never leaves go of the science that guides it. Here Alice's song is in B flat leading into F sharp, the key of the demon's chorus. Do you hear the tremolo in the orchestra? The host of devils clamour for Robert.

'Bertram now reappears, and this is the culminating point of musical interest; after a *recitative*, worthy of comparison with the finest work of the great masters, comes the fierce conflict in E flat between two tremendous forces — one on the words "*Oui, tu me connais!*" on a diminished seventh; the other, on that sublime F "*Le ciel est avec moi.*" Hell and the Crucifix have met for battle. Next we have Bertram threatening Alice, the most violent pathos ever heard — the Spirit of Evil expatiating complacently, and, as usual, appealing to personal interest. Robert's arrival gives us the magnificent unaccompanied trio in A flat, the first skirmish between the two rival forces and the man. And note how clearly that is expressed,' said Gambara, epitomising the scene with such passion of expression as startled Andrea.

'All this avalanche of music, from the clash of cymbals in common time, has been gathering up to this contest of three voices. The magic of evil triumphs! Alice flies, and you have the duet in D between Bertram and Robert. The devil sets his talons in the man's heart; he tears it to make it his own; he works on every feeling. Honour, hope, eternal and infinite pleasures — he displays them all. He places him, as he did Jesus, on the pinnacle of the Temple, and shows him all the treasures of the earth, the

storehouse of sin. He nettles him to flaunt his courage, and the man's nobler mind is expressed in his exclamation:

"Des chevaliers de ma patrie
L'honneur toujours fut le soutien!"

'And finally, to crown the work, the theme comes in which sounded the note of fatality at the beginning. Thus, the leading strain, the magnificent call to the dead:—

"Nonnes qui reposez sous cette froide pierre,
M'entendez-vous?"

'The career of the music, gloriously worked out, is gloriously finished by the *allegro vivace* of the bacchanalian chorus in D minor. This, indeed, is the triumph of hell! Roll on, harmony, and wrap us in a thousand folds! Roll on, bewitch us! The powers of darkness have clutched their prey; they hold him while they dance. The great genius, born to conquer and to reign, is lost! The devils rejoice, misery stifles genius, passion will wreck the knight!'

And here Gambara improvised a *fantasia* of his own on the bacchanalian chorus, with ingenious variations, and humming the air in a melancholy drone as if to express the secret sufferings he had known.

'Do you hear the heavenly lamentations of neglected love?' he said. 'Isabella calls to Robert above the grand chorus of knights riding forth to the tournament, in which the *motifs* of the second act reappear to make it clear that the third act has all taken place in a supernatural sphere. This is real life again. This chorus dies away at the approach of the hellish enchantment brought by Robert with the talisman. The deviltry of the third act is to be carried on. Here we have the duet with the viol; the rhythm is highly expressive of the brutal desires of a man who is omnipotent, and the Princess, by plaintive phrases,

tries to win her lover back to moderation. The musician has here placed himself in a situation of great difficulty, and has surmounted it in the loveliest number of the whole opera. How charming is the melody of the *cavatina* "*Grâce pour toi!*" All the women present understood it well; each saw herself seized and snatched away on the stage. That part alone would suffice to make the fortune of the opera. Every woman felt herself engaged in a struggle with some violent lover. Never was music so passionate and so dramatic.

'The whole world now rises in arms against the reprobate. This *finale* may be criticised for its resemblance to that of *Don Giovanni;* but there is this immense difference: in Isabella we have the expression of the noblest faith, a true love that will save Robert, for he scornfully rejects the infernal powers bestowed on him, while Don Giovanni persists in his unbelief. Moreover, that particular fault is common to every composer who has written a *finale* since Mozart. The *finale* to *Don Giovanni* is one of those classic forms that are invented once for all.

'At last religion wins the day, uplifting the voice that governs worlds, that invites all sorrow to come for consolation, all repentance to be forgiven and helped.

'The whole house was stirred by the chorus: —

"Malheureux ou coupables,
Hatez-vous d'accourir!"

'In the terrific tumult of raving passions, the holy Voice would have been unheard; but at this critical moment it sounds like thunder; the divine Catholic Church rises glorious in light. And here I was amazed to find that after such lavish use of harmonic treasure, the composer had come upon a new vein with the splendid chorus: "*Gloire à la Providence*" in the manner of Händel.

'Robert rushes on with his heart-rending cry: "*Si je pouvais prier!*" and Bertram, driven by the infernal decree,

pursues his son, and makes a last effort. Alice has called up the vision of the Mother, and now comes the grand trio to which the whole opera has led up: the triumph of the soul over matter, of the Spirit of Good over the Spirit of Evil. The strains of piety prevail over the chorus of hell, and happiness appears glorious; but here the music is weaker. I only saw a cathedral instead of hearing a concert of angels in bliss, and a divine prayer consecrating the union of Robert and Isabella. We ought not to have been left oppressed by the spells of hell; we ought to emerge with hope in our heart.

'I, as musician and a Catholic, wanted another prayer like that in *Mosé*. I should have liked to see how Germany would contend with Italy, what Meyerbeer could do in rivalry with Rossini.

'However, in spite of this trifling blemish, the writer cannot say that after five hours of such solid music, a Parisian prefers a bit of ribbon to a musical masterpiece. You heard how the work was applauded; it will go through five hundred performances! If the French really understand that music——'

'It is because it expresses ideas,' the Count put in.

'No; it is because it sets forth in a definite shape a picture of the struggle in which so many perish, and because every individual life is implicated in it through memory. Ah! I, hapless wretch, should have been too happy to hear the sound of those heavenly voices I have so often dreamed of.'

Hereupon Gambara fell into a musical day-dream, improvising the most lovely melodious and harmonious *cavatina* that Andrea would ever hear on earth; a divine strain divinely performed on a theme as exquisite as that of *O filii et filiæ*, but graced with additions such as none but the loftiest musical genius could devise.

The Count sat lost in keen admiration; the clouds cleared away, the blue sky opened, figures of angels ap-

peared lifting the veil that hid the sanctuary, and the light of heaven poured down.

There was a sudden silence.

The Count, surprised at the cessation of the music, looked at Gambara, who, with fixed gaze, in the attitude of a visionary, murmured the word: 'God!'

Andrea waited till the composer had descended from the enchanted realm to which he had soared on the many-hued wings of inspiration, intending to show him the truth by the light he himself would bring down with him.

'Well,' said he, pouring him out another bumper of wine and clinking glasses with him, 'this German has, you see, written a sublime opera without troubling himself with theories, while those musicians who write grammars of harmony may, like literary critics, be atrocious composers.'

'Then you do not like my music?'

'I do not say so. But if, instead of carrying musical principles to an extreme — which takes you too far — you would simply try to arouse our feelings, you would be better understood, unless indeed you have mistaken your vocation. You are a great poet.'

'What,' cried Gambara, 'are twenty-five years of study all in vain? Am I to learn the imperfect language of men when I have the key to the heavenly tongue? Oh, if you are right, — I should die.'

'No, no. You are great and strong; you would begin life again, and I would support you. We would show the world the noble and rare alliance of a rich man and an artist in perfect sympathy and understanding.'

'Do you mean it?' asked Gambara, struck with amazement.

'As I have told you, you are a poet more than a musician.'

'A poet, a poet! It is better than nothing. But tell me truly, which do you esteem most highly, Mozart or Homer?'

'I admire them equally.'

'On your honour?'

'On my honour.'

'H'm! Once more. What do you think of Meyerbeer and Byron?'

'You have measured them by naming them together.'

The Count's carriage was in waiting. The composer and his noble physician ran down-stairs, and in a few minutes they were with Marianna.

As they went in, Gambara threw himself into his wife's arms, but she drew back a step and turned away her head; the husband also drew back and beamed on the Count.

'Oh, monsieur!' said Gambara in a husky voice, 'you might have left me my illusions.' He hung his head, and then fell.

'What have you done to him? He is dead drunk!' cried Marianna, looking down at her husband with a mingled expression of pity and disgust.

The Count, with the help of his servant, picked up Gambara and laid him on his bed.

Then Andrea left, his heart exultant with horrible gladness.

The Count let the usual hour for calling slip past next day, for he began to fear lest he had duped himself and had made this humble couple pay too dear for their improved circumstances and added wisdom, since their peace was destroyed for ever.

At last Giardini came to him with a note from Marianna.

'Come,' she wrote, 'the mischief is not so great as you so cruelly meant it to be.'

'Eccellenza,' said the cook, while Andrea was making ready, 'you treated us splendidly last evening. But apart from the wine, which was excellent, your steward did not put anything on the table that was worthy to set before a true epicure. You will not deny, I suppose, that the dish I

sent up to you on the day when you did me the honour to sit down at my board, contained the quintessence of all those that disgraced your magnificent service of plate? And when I awoke this morning I remembered the promise you once made me of a place as *chef*. Henceforth I consider myself as a member of your household.'

'I thought of the same thing a few days ago,' replied Andrea. 'I mentioned you to the secretary of the Austrian Embassy, and you have permission to recross the Alps as soon as you please. I have a castle in Croatia which I rarely visit. There you may combine the offices of gate-keeper, butler, and steward, with two hundred crowns a year. Your wife will have as much for doing all the rest of the work. You may make all the experiments you please *in anima vili*, that is to say on the stomach of my vassals. Here is a cheque for your travelling expenses.'

Giardini kissed the Count's hand after the Neapolitan fashion.

'Eccellenza,' said he, 'I accept the cheque, but beg to decline the place. It would dishonour me to give up my art by losing the opinion of the most perfect epicures, who are certainly to be found in Paris.'

When Andrea arrived at Gambara's lodgings, the musician rose to welcome him.

'My generous friend,' said he, with the utmost frankness, 'you either took advantage, last evening, of the weakness of my brain to make a fool of me, or else your brain is no more capable of standing the test of the heady liquors of our native Latium, than mine is. I will assume this latter hypothesis; I would rather doubt your digestion than your heart. Be this as it may, henceforth I drink no more wine — for ever. The abuse of good liquor last evening led me into much guilty folly. When I remember that I very nearly —' He gave a glance of terror at Marianna. 'As to the wretched opera you took me to hear, I have thought it over, and it is, after all, music written on ordinary lines,

a mountain of piled-up notes, *verba et voces*. It is but the dregs of the nectar I can drink in deep draughts as I reproduce the heavenly music that I hear! It is a patchwork of airs of which I could trace the origin. The passage, "*Gloire à la Providence*" is too much like a bit of Händel; the chorus of knights is closely related to the Scotch air in *La Dame Blanche;* in short, if this opera is a success, it is because the music is borrowed from everybody's — so it ought to be popular.

'I will say good-bye to you, my dear friend. I have had some ideas seething in my brain since the morning that only wait to soar up to God on the wings of song, but I wished to see you. Good-bye; I must ask forgiveness of the Muse. We shall meet at dinner to-night — but no wine; at any rate, none for me. I am firmly resolved ——'

'I give him up!' cried Andrea, flushing red.

'And you restore my sense of conscience,' said Marianna. 'I dared not appeal to it! My friend, my friend, it is no fault of ours; he does not want to be cured.'

Six years after this, in January, 1837, such artists as were so unlucky as to damage their wind or stringed instruments, generally took them to the Rue Froidmanteau, to a squalid and horrible house, where, on the fifth floor, dwelt an old Italian named Gambara.

For five years past he had been left to himself, deserted by his wife; he had gone through many misfortunes. An instrument on which he had relied to make his fortune, and which he called a *Panharmonicon*, had been sold by order of the Court on the public square, Place du Châtelet, together with a cartload of music paper scrawled with notes. The day after the sale, these scores had served in the market to wrap up butter, fish, and fruit.

Thus the three grand operas of which the poor man would boast, but which an old Neapolitan cook, who was

now but a patcher up of broken meats, declared to be a heap of nonsense, were scattered throughout Paris on the trucks of costermongers. But at any rate, the landlord had got his rent and the bailiffs their expenses.

According to the Neapolitan cook — who warmed up for the street-walkers of the Rue Froidmanteau the fragments left from the most sumptuous dinners in Paris — Signora Gambara had gone off to Italy with a Milanese nobleman, and no one knew what had become of her. Worn out with fifteen years of misery, she was very likely ruining the Count by her extravagant luxury, for they were so devotedly adoring that, in all his life, Giardini could recall no instance of such a passion.

Towards the end of that very January, one evening when Giardini was chatting with a girl who had come to buy her supper, about the divine Marianna — so poor, so beautiful, so heroically devoted, and who had, nevertheless, 'gone the way of them all,' the cook, his wife, and the street-girl saw coming towards them a woman fearfully thin, with a sunburnt, dusty face; a nervous walking skeleton, looking at the numbers, and trying to recognise a house.

'*Ecco la Marianna!*' exclaimed the cook.

Marianna recognised Giardini, the erewhile cook, in the poor fellow she saw, without wondering by what series of disasters he had sunk to keep a miserable shop for second-hand food. She went in and sat down, for she had come from Fontainebleau. She had walked fourteen leagues that day, after begging her bread from Turin to Paris.

She frightened that terrible trio! Of all her wondrous beauty nothing remained but her fine eyes, dimmed and sunken. The only thing faithful to her was misfortune.

She was welcomed by the skilled old instrument mender, who greeted her with unspeakable joy.

'Why, here you are, my poor Marianna!' said he, warmly. 'During your absence they sold up my instrument and my operas.'

It would have been difficult to kill the fatted calf for the return of the Samaritan, but Giardini contributed the fag end of a salmon, the trull paid for wine, Gambara produced some bread, Signora Giardini lent a cloth, and the unfortunates all supped together in the musician's garret.

When questioned as to her adventures, Marianna would make no reply; she only raised her beautiful eyes to heaven and whispered to Giardini, —

'He married a dancer!'

'And how do you mean to live?' said the girl. 'The journey has ruined you, and ——'

'And made me an old woman,' said Marianna. 'No, that is not the result of fatigue or hardship, but of grief.'

'And why did you never send your man here any money?' asked the girl.

Marianna's only answer was a look, but it went to the woman's heart.

'She is proud with a vengeance!' she exclaimed. 'And much good it has done her!' she added, in Giardini's ear.

All that year musicians took especial care of their instruments, and repairs did not bring in enough to enable the poor couple to pay their way; the wife, too, did not earn much by her needle, and they were compelled to turn their talents to account in the lowest form of employment. They would go out together in the dark to the Champs Elysées and sing duets, which Gambara, poor fellow, accompanied on a wretched guitar. On the way Marianna, who on these expeditions covered her head with a sort of veil of coarse muslin, would take her husband to a grocer's shop in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and give him two or three thimblefuls of brandy to make him tipsy; otherwise he could not play. Then they would stand up together in front of the smart people sitting on the chairs, and one of the greatest geniuses of the time, the unrecognised Orpheus of Modern Music, would perform passages from his operas — pieces so remarkable that they could extract a few half-

pence from Parisian supineness. When some *dilettante* of comic operas happened to be sitting there and did not recognise from what work they were taken, he would question the woman dressed like a Greek priestess, who held out a bottle-stand of stamped metal in which she collected charity.

'I say, my dear, what is that music out of?'

'The opera of *Mahomet*,' Marianna would reply.

As Rossini composed an opera called *Mahomet II*, the amateur would say to his wife, sitting at his side,—

'What a pity it is that they will never give us at the Italiens any operas by Rossini but those we know. That is really very fine music!'

And Gambara would smile.

Only a few days since, this unhappy couple had to pay the trifling sum of thirty-six francs as arrears of rent for the cock-loft in which they lived resigned. The grocer would not give them credit for the brandy with which Marianna plied her husband to enable him to play. Gambara was, consequently, so unendurably bad that the ears of the wealthy were irresponsive, and the tin bottle-stand remained empty.

It was nine o'clock in the evening. A handsome Italian, the Principessa Massimilla Di Varese, took pity on the poor creatures; she gave them forty francs and questioned them, discerning from the woman's thanks that she was a Venetian. Prince Emilio would know the history of their woes, and Marianna told it, making no complaints of God or men.

'Madame,' said Gambara, as she ended, for he was sober, 'we are the victims of our own superiority. My music is good. But as soon as music transcends feeling and becomes an idea, only persons of genius should be the hearers, for they alone are capable of responding to it! It is my misfortune that I have heard the chorus of angels, and believed that men could understand those strains. The same

thing happens to women when their love assumes a divine aspect: men cannot understand them.'

This speech was well worth the forty francs bestowed by Massimilla; she took out a second gold piece, and told Marianna she would write to Andrea Marcosini.

'Do not write to him, Madame!' exclaimed Marianna. 'And God grant you to be always beautiful!'

'Let us provide for them,' said the Princess to her husband; 'for this man has remained faithful to the Ideal which we have killed.'

As he saw the gold pieces, Gambara shed tears; and then a vague reminiscence of old scientific experiments crossed his mind, and the hapless composer, as he wiped his eyes, spoke these words, which the circumstances made pathetic:

'Water is a product of burning.'

PARIS, *June*, 1837.

MASSIMILLA DONI

To Jacques Strunz

My Dear Strunz: — I should be ungrateful if I did not set your name at the head of one of the two tales I could never have written but for your patient kindness and care. Accept this as my grateful acknowledgment of the readiness with which you tried — perhaps not very successfully — to initiate me into the mysteries of musical knowledge. You have at least taught me what difficulties and what labour genius must bury in those poems which procure us transcendental pleasures. You have also afforded me the satisfaction of laughing more than once at the expense of a self-styled connoisseur.

Some have taxed me with ignorance, not knowing that I have taken counsel of one of our best musical critics, and had the benefit of your conscientious help. I have, perhaps, been an inaccurate amanuensis. If this were the case, I should be the traitorous translator without knowing it, and I yet hope to sign myself always one of your friends.

De Balzac.

As all who are learned in such matters know, the Venetian aristocracy is the first in Europe. Its *Libro d' Oro* dates from before the Crusades, from a time when Venice, a survivor of Imperial and Christian Rome which had flung itself into the waters to escape the Barbarians, was already powerful and illustrious, and the head of the political and commercial world.

With a few rare exceptions this brilliant nobility has fallen into utter ruin. Among the gondoliers who serve the English — to whom history here reads the lesson of their future fate — there are descendants of long dead Doges whose names are older than those of sovereigns. On some bridge, as you glide past it, if you are ever in Venice, you may admire some lovely girl in rags, a poor child belonging, perhaps, to one of the most famous patrician families. When a nation of kings has fallen so low, naturally some curious characters will be met with. It is not surprising that sparks should flash out among the ashes.

These reflections, intended to justify the singularity of the persons who figure in this narrative, shall not be indulged in any longer, for there is nothing more intolerable than the stale reminiscences of those who insist on talking about Venice after so many great poets and petty travellers. The interest of the tale requires only this record of the most startling contrast in the life of man: the dignity and poverty which are as conspicuous there in some of the men as they are in most of the houses.

The nobles of Venice and of Geneva, like those of Poland in former times, bore no titles. To be named Quirini, Doria, Brignole, Morosini, Sauli, Mocenigo, Fieschi, Cornaro, or Spinola, was enough for the pride of the haughtiest. But all things become corrupt. At the present day some of these families have titles.

And even at a time when the nobles of the aristocratic republics were all equal, the title of Prince was, in fact, given at Genoa to a member of the Doria family, who were sovereigns of the principality of Amalfi, and a similar title was in use at Venice, justified by ancient inheritance from Facino Cane, Prince of Varese. The Grimaldi, who assumed sovereignty, did not take possession of Monaco till much later.

The last Cane of the elder branch vanished from Venice

thirty years before the fall of the Republic, condemned for various crimes more or less criminal. The branch on whom this nominal principality then devolved, the Cane Memmi, sank into poverty during the fatal period between 1796 and 1814. In the twentieth year of the present century they were represented only by a young man whose name was Emilio, and an old palace which is regarded as one of the chief ornaments of the Grand Canal. This son of Venice the Fair had for his whole fortune this useless palazzo, and fifteen hundred francs a year derived from a country house on the Brenta, the last plot of the lands his family had formerly owned on *terra firma*, and sold to the Austrian government. This little income spared our handsome Emilio the ignominy of accepting, as many nobles did, the indemnity of a franc a day, due to every impoverished patrician under the stipulations of the cession to Austria.

At the beginning of winter, this young gentleman was still lingering in a country house situated at the base of the Tyrolese Alps, and purchased in the previous spring by the Duchess Cataneo. The house, erected by Palladio for the Piepolo family, is a square building of the finest style of architecture. There is a stately staircase with a marble portico on each side; the vestibules are crowded with frescoes, and made light by sky-blue ceilings across which graceful figures float amid ornament rich in design, but so well proportioned that the building carries it, as a woman carries her head-dress, with an ease that charms the eye; in short, the grace and dignity that characterise the *Procuratie* in the piazzetta at Venice. Stone walls, admirably decorated, keep the rooms at a pleasantly cool temperature. Verandahs outside, painted in fresco, screen off the glare. The flooring throughout is the old Venetian inlay of marbles, cut into unfading flowers.

The furniture, like that of all Italian palaces, was rich with handsome silks, judiciously employed, and valuable pictures favourably hung; some by the Genoese priest,

known as *il Capucino*, several by Leonardo da Vinci, Carlo Dolci, Tintoretto, and Titian.

The shelving gardens were full of the marvels where money has been turned into rocky grottoes and patterns of shells, — the very madness of craftsmanship, — terraces laid out by the fairies, arbours of sterner aspect, where the cypress on its tall trunk, the triangular pines, and the melancholy olive mingled pleasingly with orange trees, bays, and myrtles, and clear pools in which blue or russet fishes swam. Whatever may be said in favour of the natural or English garden, these trees, pruned into parasols, and yews fantastically clipped; this luxury of art so skilfully combined with that of nature in Court dress; those cascades over marble steps where the water spreads so shyly, a filmy scarf swept aside by the wind and immediately renewed; those bronzed metal figures speechlessly inhabiting the silent grove; that lordly palace, an object in the landscape from every side, raising its light outline at the foot of the Alps, — all the living thoughts which animate the stone, the bronze, and the trees, or express themselves in garden-plots, — this lavish prodigality was in perfect keeping with the loves of a duchess and a handsome youth, for they are a poem far removed from the coarse ends of brutal nature.

Any one with a soul for fantasy would have looked to see, on one of those noble flights of steps, standing by a vase with medallions in bas-relief, a negro boy swathed about the loins with scarlet stuff, and holding in one hand a parasol over the Duchess's head, and in the other the train of her long skirt, while she listened to Emilio Memmi. And how far grander the Venetian would have looked in such a dress as the senators wore whom Titian painted.

But alas! in this fairy palace, not unlike that of the Peschieri at Genoa, the Duchess Cataneo obeyed the edicts of Victorine and the Paris fashions. She had on a muslin dress and broad straw hat, pretty shot silk shoes, thread lace stockings that a breath of air would have blown away;

and over her shoulders a black lace shawl. But the thing which no one could ever understand in Paris, where women are sheathed in their dresses as a dragon-fly is cased in its annular armour, was the perfect freedom with which this lovely daughter of Tuscany wore her French attire; she had Italianised it. A Frenchwoman treats her skirt with the greatest seriousness; an Italian never thinks about it; she does not attempt self-protection by some prim glance, for she knows that she is safe in that of a devoted love, a passion as sacred and serious in her eyes as in those of others.

At eleven in the forenoon, after a walk, and by the side of a table still strewn with the remains of an elegant breakfast, the Duchess, lounging in an easy-chair, left her lover the master of these muslin draperies, without a frown each time he moved. Emilio, seated at her side, held one of her hands between his, gazing at her with utter absorption. Ask not whether they loved; they loved only too well. They were not reading out of the same book, like Paolo and Francesca; far from it, Emilio dared not say: 'Let us read.' The gleam of those eyes, those glistening grey irises streaked with threads of gold that started from the centre like rifts of light, giving her gaze a soft, star-like radiance, thrilled him with nervous rapture that was almost a spasm. Sometimes the mere sight of the splendid black hair that crowned the adored head, bound by a simple gold fillet, and falling in satin tresses on each side of a spacious brow, was enough to give him a ringing in his ears, the wild tide of the blood rushing through his veins as if it must burst his heart. By what obscure phenomenon did his soul so overmaster his body that he was no longer conscious of his independent self, but was wholly one with this woman at the least word she spoke in that voice which disturbed the very sources of life in him? If, in utter seclusion, a woman of moderate charms can, by being constantly studied, seem supreme

and imposing, perhaps one so magnificently handsome as the Duchess could fascinate to stupidity a youth in whom rapture found some fresh incitement; for she had really absorbed his young soul.

Massimilla, the heiress of the Doni, of Florence, had married the Sicilian Duke Cataneo. Her mother, since dead, had hoped, by promoting this marriage, to leave her rich and happy, according to Florentine custom. She had concluded that her daughter, emerging from a convent to embark in life, would achieve, under the laws of love, that second union of heart with heart which, to an Italian woman, is all in all. But Massimilla Doni had acquired in her convent a real taste for a religious life, and, when she had pledged her troth to Duke Cataneo, she was Christianly content to be his wife.

This was an untenable position. Cataneo, who only looked for a duchess, thought himself ridiculous as a husband; and, when Massimilla complained of his indifference, he calmly bid her look about her for a *cavaliere servente*, even offering his services to introduce to her some youths from whom to choose. The Duchess wept; the Duke made his bow.

Massimilla looked about her at the world that crowded round her; her mother took her to the Pergola, to some ambassadors' drawing-rooms, to the Cascine — wherever handsome young men of fashion were to be met; she saw none to her mind, and determined to travel. Then she lost her mother, inherited her property, assumed mourning, and made her way to Venice. There she saw Emilio, who, as he went past her opera box, exchanged with her a flash of enquiry.

This was all. The Venetian was thunderstruck, while a voice in the Duchess's ear called out: 'This is he!'

Anywhere else two persons more prudent and less guileless would have studied and examined each other; but these two ignorances mingled like two masses of homo-

geneous matter, which, when they meet, form but one. Massimilla was at once and thenceforth Venetian. She bought the palazzo she had rented on the Canareggio; and then, not knowing how to invest her wealth, she had purchased Rivalta, the country-place where she was now staying.

Emilio, being introduced to the Duchess by the Signora Vulpato, waited very respectfully on the lady in her box all through the winter. Never was love more ardent in two souls, or more bashful in its advances. The two children were afraid of each other. Massimilla was no coquette. She had no second string to her bow, no *secondo*, no *terzo*, no *patito*. Satisfied with a smile and word, she admired her Venetian youth, with his pointed face, his long, thin nose, his black eyes, and noble brow; but, in spite of her artless encouragement, he never went to her house till they had spent three months in getting used to each other.

Then summer brought its Eastern sky. The Duchess lamented having to go alone to Rivalta. Emilio, at once happy and uneasy at the thought of being alone with her, had accompanied Massimilla to her retreat. And now this pretty pair had been here for six months.

Massimilla, now twenty, had not sacrificed her religious principles to her passion without a struggle. Still they had yielded, though tardily; and at this moment she would have been ready to consummate the love union for which her mother had prepared her, as Emilio sat there holding her beautiful, aristocratic hand, — long, white, and sheeny, ending in fine, rosy nails, as if she had procured from Asia some of the henna with which the Sultan's wives dye their finger-tips.

A misfortune, of which she was unconscious, but which was torture to Emilio, kept up a singular barrier between them. Massimilla, young as she was, had the majestic bearing which mythological tradition ascribes to Juno, the

only goddess to whom it does not give a lover; for Diana, the chaste Diana, lóved! Jupiter alone could hold his own with his divine better-half, on whom many English ladies model themselves.

Emilio set his mistress far too high ever to touch her. A year hence, perhaps, he might not be a victim to this noble error which attacks none but very young or very old men. But as the archer who shoots beyond the mark is as far from it as he whose arrow falls short of it, the Duchess found herself between a husband who knew he was so far from reaching the target, that he had ceased to try for it, and a lover who was carried so much past it on the white wings of an angel, that he could not get back to it. Massimilla could be happy with desire, not imagining its issue; but her lover, distressful in his happiness, would sometimes obtain from his beloved a promise that led her to the edge of what many women call 'the gulf,' and thus found himself obliged to be satisfied with plucking the flowers at the edge, incapable of daring more than to pull off their petals, and smother his torture in his heart.

They had wandered out together that morning, repeating such a hymn of love as the birds warbled in the branches. On their return, the youth, whose situation can only be described by comparing him to the cherubs represented by painters as having only a head and wings, had been so impassioned as to venture to hint a doubt as to the Duchess's entire devotion, so as to bring her to the point of saying: 'What proof do you need?'

The question had been asked with a royal air, and Memmi had ardently kissed the beautiful and guileless hand. Then he suddenly started up in a rage with himself, and left the Duchess. Massimilla remained in her indolent attitude on the sofa; but she wept, wondering how, young and handsome as she was, she could fail to please Emilio. Memmi, on the other hand, knocked his head against the tree-trunks like a hooded crow.

But at this moment a servant came in pursuit of the young Venetian to deliver a letter brought by express messenger.

Marco Vendramini, — a name also pronounced Vendramin, in the Venetian dialect, which drops many final letters, — his only friend, wrote to tell him that Facino Cane, Prince of Varese, had died in a hospital in Paris. Proofs of his death had come to hand, and the Cane-Memmi were Princes of Varese. In the eyes of the two young men a title without wealth being worthless, Vendramin also informed Emilio, as of a far more important fact, of the engagement at the *Fenice* of the famous tenor Genovese, and the no less famous Signora Tinti.

Without waiting to finish the letter, which he crumpled up and put in his pocket, Emilio ran to communicate this great news to the Duchess, forgetting his heraldic honours.

The Duchess knew nothing of the strange story which made La Tinti an object of curiosity in Italy, and Emilio briefly repeated it.

This illustrious singer had been a mere inn-servant, whose wonderful voice had captivated a great Sicilian nobleman on his travels. The girl's beauty — she was then twelve years old — being worthy of her voice, the gentleman had had the moderation to have her brought up, as Louis XV had Mademoiselle de Romans educated. He had waited patiently till Clara's voice had been fully trained by a famous professor, and till she was sixteen, before taking toll of the treasure so carefully cultivated.

La Tinti had made her début the year before, and had enchanted the three most fastidious capitals of Italy.

'I am perfectly certain that her great nobleman is not my husband,' said the Duchess.

The horses were ordered, and the Duchess set out at once for Venice, to be present at the opening of the winter season.

So one fine evening in November, the new Prince of Varese was crossing the lagoon from Mestre to Venice, between the lines of stakes painted with Austrian colours, which mark out the channel for gondolas as conceded by the custom-house. As he watched Massimilla's gondola, navigated by men in livery, and cutting through the water a few yards in front, poor Emilio, with only an old gondolier who had been his father's servant in the days when Venice was still a living city, could not repress the bitter reflections suggested to him by the assumption of his title.

'What a mockery of fortune! A prince — with fifteen hundred francs a year! Master of one of the finest palaces in the world, and unable to sell the statues, stairs, paintings, sculpture, which an Austrian decree had made inalienable! To live on a foundation of piles of campeachy wood worth nearly a million of francs, and have no furniture! To own sumptuous galleries, and live in an attic above the topmost arabesque cornice constructed of marble brought from the Morea — the land which a Memmius had marched over as conqueror in the time of the Romans! To see his ancestors in effigy on their tombs of precious marbles in one of the most splendid churches in Venice, and in a chapel graced with pictures by Titian and Tintoretto, by Palma, Bellini, Paul Veronese — and to be prohibited from selling a marble Memmi to the English for bread for the living Prince Varese! Genovese, the famous tenor, could get in one season, by his warbling, the capital of an income on which this son of the Memmi could live — this descendant of Roman senators as venerable as Cæsar and Sylla. Genovese may smoke an Eastern hookah, and the Prince of Varese cannot even have enough cigars!'

He tossed the end he was smoking into the sea. The Prince of Varese found cigars at the Duchess Cataneo's; how gladly would he have laid the treasures of the world at her feet! She studied all his caprices, and was happy to gratify them. He made his only meal at her house — his

supper; for all his money was spent in clothes and his place in the *Fenice.* He had also to pay a hundred francs a year as wages to his father's old gondolier; and he, to serve him for that sum, had to live exclusively on rice. Also he kept enough to take a cup of black coffee every morning at Florian's to keep himself up till the evening in a state of nervous excitement, and this habit, carried to excess, he hoped would in due time kill him, as Vendramin relied on opium.

'And I am a prince!'

As he spoke the words, Emilio Memmi tossed Marco Vendramin's letter into the lagoon without even reading it to the end, and it floated away like a paper boat launched by a child.

'But Emilio,' he went on to himself, 'is but three and twenty. He is a better man than Lord Wellington with the gout, than the paralysed Regent, than the epileptic royal family of Austria, than the King of France ——'

But as he thought of the King of France Emilio's brow was knit, his ivory skin burned yellower, tears gathered in his black eyes and hung to his long lashes; he raised a hand worthy to be painted by Titian to push back his thick brown hair, and gazed again at Massimilla's gondola.

'And this insolent mockery of fate is carried even into my love affair,' said he to himself. 'My heart and imagination are full of precious gifts; Massimilla will none of them; she is a Florentine, and she will throw me over. I have to sit by her side like ice, while her voice and her looks fire me with heavenly sensations! As I watch her gondola a few hundred feet away from my own I feel as if a hot iron were set on my heart. An invisible fluid courses through my frame and scorches my nerves, a cloud dims my sight, the air seems to me to glow as it did at Rivalta when the sunlight came through a red silk blind, and I, without her knowing it, could admire her lost in dreams, with her subtle smile like that of Leonardo's Mona Lisa.

Well, either my Highness will end my days by a pistol-shot, or the heir of the Cane will follow old Carmagnola's advice; we will be sailors, pirates; and it will be amusing to see how long we can live without being hanged.'

The Prince lighted another cigar, and watched the curls of smoke as the wind wafted them away, as though he saw in their arabesques an echo of this last thought.

In the distance he could now perceive the mauresque pinnacles that crowned his palazzo, and he was sadder than ever. The Duchess's gondola had vanished in the Canareggio.

These fantastic pictures of a romantic and perilous existence, as the outcome of his love, went out with his cigar, and his lady's gondola no longer traced his path. Then he saw the present in its real light: a palace without a soul, a soul that had no effect on the body, a principality without money, an empty body and a full heart — a thousand heartbreaking contradictions. The hapless youth mourned for Venice as she had been, — as did Vendramini, even more bitterly, for it was a great and common sorrow, a similar destiny, that had engendered such a warm friendship between these two young men, the wreckage of two illustrious families.

Emilio could not help dreaming of a time when the palazzo Memmi poured light from every window, and rang with music carried far away over the Adriatic tide; when hundreds of gondolas might be seen tied up to its mooring-posts, while graceful masked figures and the magnates of the Republic crowded up the steps kissed by the waters; when its halls and gallery were full of a throng of intriguers or their dupes; when the great banqueting-hall, filled with merry feasters, and the upper balconies furnished with musicians, seemed to harbour all Venice coming and going on the great staircase that rang with laughter.

The chisels of the greatest artists of many centuries had sculptured the bronze brackets supporting long-necked or

pot-bellied Chinese vases, and the candelabra for a thousand tapers. Every country had furnished some contribution to the splendour that decked the walls and ceilings. But now the panels were stripped of the handsome hangings, the melancholy ceilings were speechless and sad. No Turkey carpets, no lustres bright with flowers, no statues, no pictures, no more joy, no money — the great means to enjoyment! Venice, the London of the Middle Ages, was falling stone by stone, man by man. The ominous green weed which the sea washes and kisses at the foot of every palace, was, in the Prince's eyes, a black fringe hung by nature as an omen of death.

And finally, a great English poet had rushed down on Venice like a raven on a corpse, to croak out in lyric poetry — the first and last utterance of social man — the burthen of a *de profundis.* English poetry! Flung in the face of the city that had given birth to Italian poetry! Poor Venice!

Conceive, then, of the young man's amazement when roused from such meditations by Carmagnola's cry: —

'Serenissimo, the palazzo is on fire, or the old Doges have risen from their tombs! There are lights in the windows of the upper floor!'

Prince Emilio fancied that his dream was realised by the touch of a magic wand. It was dusk, and the old gondolier could by tying up his gondola to the top step, help his young master to land without being seen by the bustling servants in the palazzo, some of whom were buzzing about the landing-place like bees at the door of a hive. Emilio stole into the great hall, whence rose the finest flight of stairs in all Venice, up which he lightly ran to investigate the cause of this strange bustle.

A whole tribe of workmen were hurriedly completing the furnishing and redecoration of the palace. The first floor, worthy of the antique glories of Venice, displayed to Emilio's waking eyes the magnificence of which he

had just been dreaming, and the fairy had exercised admirable taste. Splendour worthy of a parvenu sovereign was to be seen even in the smallest details. Emilio wandered about without remark from anybody, and surprise followed on surprise.

Curious, then, to know what was going forward on the second floor, he went up, and found everything finished. The unknown labourers, commissioned by a wizard to revive the marvels of the Arabian nights in behalf of an impoverished Italian prince, were exchanging some inferior articles of furniture brought in for the nonce. Prince Emilio made his way into the bedroom, which smiled on him like a shell just deserted by Venus. The room was so charmingly pretty, so daintily smart, so full of elegant contrivance, that he straightway seated himself in an armchair of gilt wood, in front of which a most appetizing cold supper stood ready, and, without more ado, proceeded to eat.

'In all the world there is no one but Massimilla who would have thought of this surprise,' thought he. 'She heard that I was now a prince; Duke Cataneo is perhaps dead, and has left her his fortune; she is twice as rich as she was; she will marry me——'

And he ate in a way that would have roused the envy of an invalid Crœsus, if he could have seen him; and he drank floods of capital port wine.

'Now I understand the knowing little air she put on as she said, "Till this evening!" Perhaps she means to come and break the spell. What a fine bed! and in the bed-place such a pretty lamp! Quite a Florentine idea!'

There are some strongly blended natures on which extremes of joy or of grief have a soporific effect. Now on a youth so compounded that he could idealise his mistress to the point of ceasing to think of her as a woman, this sudden incursion of wealth had the effect of a dose of opium. When the Prince had drunk the whole of the

bottle of port, eaten half a fish and some portion of a French pâté, he felt an irresistible longing for bed. Perhaps he was suffering from a double intoxication. So he pulled off the counterpane, opened the bed, undressed in a pretty dressing-room, and lay down to meditate on destiny.

'I forgot poor Carmagnola,' said he; 'but my cook and butler will have provided for him.'

At this juncture, a waiting-woman came in, lightly humming an air from the *Barbiere*. She tossed a woman's dress on a chair, a whole outfit for the night, and said as she did so:—

'Here they come!'

And in fact, a few minutes later a young lady came in, dressed in the latest French style, who might have sat for some English fancy portrait engraved for a *Forget-me-not*, a *Belle Assemblée*, or a *Book of Beauty*.

The Prince shivered with delight and with fear, for, as you know, he was in love with Massimilla. But, in spite of this faith in love which fired his blood, and which of old inspired the painters of Spain, which gave Italy her Madonnas, created Michael Angelo's statues and Ghiberti's doors of the Baptistery,—desire had him in its toils, and agitated him without infusing into his heart that warm, ethereal glow which he felt at a look or a word from the Duchess. His soul, his heart, his reason, every impulse of his will, revolted at the thought of an infidelity; and yet that brutal, unreasoning infidelity domineered over his spirit. But the woman was not alone.

The Prince saw one of those figures in which nobody believes when they are transferred from real life, where we wonder at them, to the imaginary existence of a more or less literary description. The dress of this stranger, like that of all Neapolitans, displayed five colours, if the black of his hat may count for a colour; his trousers were olive-brown, his red waistcoat shone with gilt buttons, his coat

was greenish, and his linen was more yellow than white. This personage seemed to have made it his business to verify the Neapolitan as represented by Gerolamo on the stage of his puppet show. His eyes looked like glass beads. His nose, like the ace of clubs, was horribly long and bulbous; in fact, it did its best to conceal an opening which it would be an insult to the human countenance to call a mouth; within, three or four tusks were visible, endowed, as it seemed, with a proper motion and fitting into each other. His fleshy ears drooped by their own weight, giving the creature a whimsical resemblance to a dog.

His complexion, tainted, no doubt, by various metallic infusions as prescribed by some Hippocrates, verged on black. A pointed skull, scarcely covered by a few straight hairs like spun glass, crowned this forbidding face with red spots. Finally, though the man was very thin and of medium height, he had long arms and broad shoulders.

In spite of these hideous details, and though he looked fully seventy, he did not lack a certain cyclopean dignity; he had aristocratic manners and the confident demeanour of a rich man.

Any one who could have found courage enough to study him, would have seen his history written by base passions on this noble clay degraded to mud. Here was the man of high birth, who, rich from his earliest youth, had given up his body to debauchery for the sake of extravagant enjoyment. And debauchery had destroyed the human being and made another after its own image. Thousands of bottles of wine had disappeared under the purple archway of that preposterous nose, and left their dregs on his lips. Long and slow digestion had destroyed his teeth. His eyes had grown dim under the lamps of the gaming-table. The blood tainted with impurities had vitiated the nervous system. The expenditure of force in the task of digestion had undermined his intellect. Finally, amours

had thinned his hair. Each vice, like a greedy heir, had stamped possession on some part of the living body.

Those who watch nature detect her in jests of the shrewdest irony. For instance, she places toads in the neighbourhood of flowers, as she had placed this man by the side of this rose of love.

'Will you play the violin this evening, my dear Duke?' asked the woman, as she unhooked a cord to let a handsome curtain fall over the door.

'Play the violin!' thought Prince Emilio. 'What can have happened to my palazzo? Am I awake? Here I am, in that woman's bed, and she certainly thinks herself at home — she has taken off her cloak! Have I, like Vendramin, inhaled opium, and am I in the midst of one of those dreams in which he sees Venice as it was three centuries ago?'

The unknown fair one, seated in front of a dressing-table blazing with wax lights, was unfastening her frippery with the utmost calmness.

'Ring for Giulia,' said she; 'I want to get my dress off.'

At that instant, the Duke noticed that the supper had been disturbed; he looked round the room, and discovered the Prince's trousers hanging over a chair at the foot of the bed.

'Clarina, I will not ring!' cried the Duke, in a shrill voice of fury. 'I will not play the violin this evening, nor to-morrow, nor ever again ——'

'Ta, ta, ta, ta!' sang Clarina, on the four octaves of the same note, leaping from one to the next with the ease of a nightingale.

'In spite of that voice, which would make your patron saint Clara envious, you are really too impudent, you rascally hussy!'

'You have not brought me up to listen to such abuse,' said she, with some pride.

'Have I brought you up to hide a man in your bed?

You are unworthy alike of my generosity and of my hatred —— '

'A man in my bed!' exclaimed Clarina, hastily looking round.

'And after daring to eat our supper, as if he were at home,' added the Duke.

'But am I not at home?' cried Emilio. 'I am the Prince of Varese; this palace is mine.'

As he spoke, Emilio sat up in the bed, his handsome and noble Venetian head framed in the flowing hangings.

At first Clarina laughed — one of those irrepressible fits of laughter which seize a girl when she meets with an adventure comic beyond all conception. But her laughter ceased as she saw the young man, who, as has been said, was remarkably handsome, though but lightly attired; the madness that possessed Emilio seized her, too, and, as she had no one to adore, no sense of reason bridled her sudden fancy — a Sicilian woman in love.

'Although this is the palazzo Memmi, I will thank your Highness to quit,' said the Duke, assuming the cold irony of a polished gentleman. 'I am at home here.'

'Let me tell you, Monsieur le Duc, that you are in my room, not in your own,' said Clarina, rousing herself from her amazement. 'If you have any doubts of my virtue, at any rate give me the benefit of my crime —— '

'Doubts! Say proof positive, my lady!'

'I swear to you that I am innocent,' replied Clarina.

'What, then, do I see in that bed?' asked the Duke.

'Old Ogre!' cried Clarina. 'If you believe your eyes rather than my assertion, you have ceased to love me. Go, and do not weary my ears! Do you hear? Go, Monsieur le Duc. This young Prince will repay you the million francs I have cost you, if you insist.'

'I will repay nothing,' said Emilio, in an undertone.

'There is nothing due! A million is cheap for Clara Tinti when a man is so ugly. Now, go,' said she to the

Duke. 'You dismissed me; now I dismiss you. We are quits.'

At a gesture on Cataneo's part, as he seemed inclined to dispute this order, which was given with an action worthy of Semiramis, — the part in which la Tinti had won her fame, — the prima donna flew at the old ape and put him out of the room.

'If you do not leave me in quiet this evening, we never meet again. And my *never* counts for more than yours,' she added.

'Quiet!' retorted the Duke, with a bitter laugh. 'Dear idol, it strikes me that I am leaving you *agitata!*'

The Duke departed.

His mean spirit was no surprise to Emilio.

Every man who has accustomed himself to some particular taste, chosen from among the various effects of love, in harmony with his own nature, knows that no consideration can stop a man who has allowed his passions to become a habit.

Clarina bounded like a fawn from the door to the bed.

'A prince, and poor, young, and handsome!' cried she. 'Why, it is a perfect fairy tale!'

The Sicilian perched herself on the bed with the artless freedom of an animal, the yearning of a plant for the sun, the airy motion of a branch waltzing to the breeze. As she unbuttoned the wristbands of her sleeves, she began to sing, not in the pitch that won her the applause of an audience at the *Fenice*, but in a warble tender with emotion. Her song was a zephyr carrying the caresses of her love to the heart.

She stole a glance at Emilio, who was as much embarrassed as she; for this woman of the stage had lost all the boldness that had sparkled in her eyes and given decision to her voice and gestures when she dismissed the Duke. She was as humble as a courtesan who has fallen in love.

To picture la Tinti you must recall one of our best French singers when she came out in *Il Fazzoletto*, an opera by Garcia that was then being played by an Italian company at the theatre in the Rue Louvois. She was so beautiful that a Naples guardsman, having failed to win a hearing, killed himself in despair. The prima donna of the *Fenice* had the same refinement of features, the same elegant figure, and was equally young; but she had in addition the warm blood of Sicily that gave a glow to her loveliness. Her voice was fuller and richer, and she had that air of native majesty that is characteristic of Italian women.

La Tinti — whose name also resembled that which the French singer assumed — was now seventeen, and the poor Prince three and twenty. What mocking hand had thought it sport to bring the match so near to the powder? A fragrant room hung with rose-coloured silk and brilliant with wax lights, a bed dressed in lace, a silent palace, and Venice! Two young and beautiful creatures! every ravishment at once.

Emilio snatched up his trousers, jumped out of bed, escaped into the dressing-room, put on his clothes, came back and hurried to the door.

These were his thoughts while dressing: —

'Massimilla, beloved daughter of the Doni, in whom Italian beauty is an hereditary prerogative, you who are worthy of the portrait of *Margherita*, one of the few canvases painted entirely by Raphael to his glory! My beautiful and saintly Mistress, shall I not have deserved you if I fly from this abyss of flowers? Should I be worthy of you if I profaned a heart that is wholly yours? No; I will not fall into the vulgar snare laid for me by my rebellious senses! This girl has her Duke, mine be my Duchess!'

As he lifted the curtain, he heard a moan. The heroic lover looked round and saw Clarina on her knees, her face

hidden in the bed, choking with sobs. Is it to be believed? The singer was lovelier kneeling thus, her face invisible, than even in her confusion with a glowing countenance. Her hair, which had fallen over her shoulders, her Magdalen-like attitude, the disorder of her half-unfastened dress, — the whole picture had been composed by the devil, who, as is well known, is a fine colourist.

The Prince put his arm round the weeping girl, who slipped from him like a snake, and clung to one foot, pressing it to her beautiful bosom.

'Will you explain to me,' said he, shaking his foot to free it from her embrace, 'how you happen to be in my palazzo? How the impoverished Emilio Memmi ——'

'Emilio Memmi!' cried Tinti, rising. 'You said you were a Prince?'

'A Prince since yesterday.'

'You are in love with the Duchess Cataneo!' said she, looking at him from head to foot.

Emilio stood mute, seeing that the prima donna was smiling at him through her tears.

'Your Highness does not know that the man who had me trained for the stage — that the Duke — is Cataneo himself. And your friend Vendramini, thinking to do you a service, let him this palace for a thousand crowns, for the period of my season at the *Fenice*. Dear idol of my heart!' she went on, taking his hand and drawing him towards her, 'why do you fly from one for whom many a man would run the risk of broken bones? Love, you see, is always love. It is the same everywhere; it is the sun of our souls; we can warm ourselves wherever it shines, and here — now — it is full noonday. If to-morrow you are not satisfied, kill me! But I shall survive, for I am a real beauty!'

Emilio decided on remaining. When he signified his consent by a nod the impulse of delight that sent a shiver through Clarina seemed to him like a light from hell.

Love had never before appeared to him in so impressive a form.

At that moment Carmagnola whistled loudly.

'What can he want of me?' said the Prince.

But bewildered by love, Emilio paid no heed to the gondolier's repeated signals.

If you have never travelled in Switzerland you may perhaps read this description with pleasure; and if you have clambered among those mountains you will not be sorry to be reminded of the scenery.

In that sublime land, in the heart of a mass of rock riven by a gorge, — a valley as wide as the Avenue de Neuilly in Paris, but a hundred fathoms deep and broken into ravines, — flows a torrent coming from some tremendous height of the Saint-Gothard on the Simplon, which has formed a pool, I know not how many yards deep or how many feet long and wide, hemmed in by splintered cliffs of granite on which meadows find a place, with fir-trees between them, and enormous elms, and where violets also grow, and strawberries. Here and there stands a châlet and at the window you may see the rosy face of a yellow-haired Swiss girl. According to the moods of the sky the water in this tarn is blue and green, but as a sapphire is blue, as an emerald is green. Well, nothing in the world can give such an idea of depth, peace, immensity, heavenly love, and eternal happiness — to the most heedless traveller, the most hurried courier, the most commonplace tradesman — as this liquid diamond into which the snow, gathering from the highest Alps, trickles through a natural channel hidden under the trees and eaten through the rock, escaping below through a gap without a sound. The watery sheet overhanging the fall glides so gently that no ripple is to be seen on the surface which mirrors the chaise as you drive past. The post-boy smacks his whip; you turn past a crag; you cross a bridge: suddenly there is a terrific uproar of cascades tumbling together one upon another. The water, taking a

mighty leap, is broken into a hundred falls, dashed to spray on the boulders; it sparkles in a myriad jets against a mass that has fallen from the heights that tower over the ravine exactly in the middle of the road that has been so irresistibly cut by the most formidable of active forces.

If you have formed a clear idea of this landscape, you will see in those sleeping waters the image of Emilio's love for the Duchess, and in the cascades leaping like a flock of sheep, an idea of his passion shared with la Tinti. In the midst of his torrent of love a rock stood up against which the torrent broke. The Prince, like Sisyphus, was constantly under the stone.

'What on earth does the Duke do with a violin?' he wondered. 'Do I owe this symphony to him?'

He asked Clara Tinti.

'My dear child,'—for she saw that Emilio was but a child,—'dear child,' said she, 'that man, who is a hundred and eighteen in the parish register of vice, and only forty-seven in the register of the Church, has but one single joy left to him in life. Yes, everything is broken, everything in him is ruin or rags; his soul, intellect, heart, nerves,—everything in man that can supply an impulse and remind him of heaven, either by desire or enjoyment, is bound up with music, or rather with one of the many effects produced by music, the perfect unison of two voices, or of a voice with the top string of his violin. The old ape sits on my knee, takes his instrument,—he plays fairly well,—he produces the notes, and I try to imitate them. Then, when the long-sought-for moment comes when it is impossible to distinguish in the body of sound which is the note on the violin and which proceeds from my throat, the old man falls into an ecstasy, his dim eyes light up with their last remaining fires, he is quite happy and will roll on the floor like a drunken man.

'That is why he pays Genovese such a price. Genovese is the only tenor whose voice occasionally sounds in

unison with mine. Either we really do sing exactly together once or twice in an evening, or the Duke imagines that we do; and for that imaginary pleasure he has bought Genovese. Genovese belongs to him. No theatrical manager can engage that tenor without me, nor have me to sing without him. The Duke brought me up on purpose to gratify that whim; to him I owe my talent, my beauty, — my fortune, no doubt. He will die of an attack of perfect unison. The sense of hearing alone has survived the wreck of his faculties; that is the one thread by which he holds on to life. A vigorous shoot springs from that rotten stump. There are, I am told, many men in the same predicament. May Madonna preserve them!

'You have not come to that! You can do all you want — all I want of you, I know.'

Towards morning the Prince stole away and found Carmagnola lying asleep across the door.

'Altezza,' said the gondolier, 'the Duchess ordered me to give you this note.'

He held out a dainty sheet of paper folded into a triangle. The Prince felt dizzy; he went back into the room and dropped into a chair, for his sight was dim, and his hands shook as he read: —

'Dear Emilio: — Your gondola stopped at your palazzo. Did you not know that Cataneo has taken it for la Tinti? If you love me, go to-night to Vendramin, who tells me he has a room ready for you in his house. What shall I do? Can I remain in Venice to see my husband and his opera singer? Shall we go back together to Friuli? Write me one word, if only to tell me what the letter was that you tossed into the lagoon.

'Massimilla Doni.'

The writing and the scent of the paper brought a thousand memories back to the young Venetian's mind. The sun of a single-minded passion threw its radiance on the blue depths come from so far, collected in a bottomless pool, and shining like a star. The noble youth could not restrain the tears that flowed freely from his eyes, for in the languid state produced by satiated senses he was disarmed by the thought of that purer divinity.

Even in her sleep Clarina heard his weeping; she sat up in bed, saw her Prince in a dejected attitude, and threw herself at his knees.

'They are still waiting for the answer,' said Carmagnola, putting the curtain aside.

'Wretch, you have undone me!' cried Emilio, starting up and spurning Clarina with his foot.

She clutched it so lovingly, her look imploring some explanation,—the look of a tear-stained Samaritan,—that Emilio, enraged to find himself still in the toils of the passion that had wrought his fall, pushed away the singer with an unmanly kick.

'You told me to kill you,—then die, venomous reptile!' he exclaimed.

He left the palace, and sprang into his gondola.

'Pull,' said he to Carmagnola.

'Where?' asked the old servant.

'Where you will.'

The gondolier divined his master's wishes, and by many windings brought him at last into the Canareggio, to the door of a wonderful palazzo, which you will admire when you see Venice, for no traveller ever fails to stop in front of those windows, each of different design, vying with each other in fantastic ornament, with balconies like lace-work; to study the corners finishing in tall and slender twisted columns, the string-courses wrought by so inventive a chisel that no two shapes are alike in the arabesques on the stones.

How charming is that doorway! how mysterious the vaulted arcade leading to the stairs! Who could fail to admire the steps on which ingenious art has laid a carpet that will last while Venice stands, — a carpet as rich as if wrought in Turkey, but composed of marbles in endless variety of shapes, inlaid in white marble. You will delight in the charming ornament of the colonnades of the upper story, — gilt like those of the ducal palace, — so that the marvels of art are both under your feet and above your head.

What delicate shadows! How silent, how cool! But how solemn, too, was that old palace! where, to delight Emilio and his friend Vendramin, the Duchess had collected antique Venetian furniture, and employed skilled hands to restore the ceilings. There, old Venice lived again. The splendour was not merely noble, it was instructive. The archæologist would have there found such models of perfection as the middle ages produced, having taken example from Venice. Here were to be seen the original ceilings of woodwork covered with scrolls and flowers in gold on a coloured ground, or in colours on gold, and ceilings of gilt plaster castings, with a picture of many figures in each corner, with a splendid fresco in the centre, — a style so costly that there are not two in the Louvre, and that the extravagance of Louis XIV shrunk from such expense at Versailles. On all sides marble, wood, and silk had served as materials for exquisite workmanship.

Emilio pushed open a carved oak door, made his way down the long, vaulted passage which runs from end to end on each floor of a Venetian palazzo, and stopped before another door, so familiar that it made his heart beat. On seeing him, a lady companion came out of a vast drawing-room, and admitted him to a study where he found the Duchess on her knees in front of a Madonna.

He had come to confess and ask forgiveness. Massi-

milla, in prayer, had converted him. He and God; nothing else dwelt in that heart.

The Duchess rose very unaffectedly, and held out her hand. Her lover did not take it.

'Did not Gianbattista see you, yesterday?' she asked.

'No,' replied he.

'That piece of ill luck gave me a night of misery. I was so afraid lest you might meet the Duke, whose perversity I know too well. What made Vendramin let your palace to him?'

'It was a good idea, Milla, for your Prince is poor enough.'

Massimilla was so beautiful in her trust in him, and so wonderfully lovely, so happy in Emilio's presence, that at this moment the Prince, wide awake, experienced the sensations of the horrible dream that torments persons of a lively imagination, in which after arriving in a ballroom full of women in full dress, the dreamer is suddenly aware that he is naked, without even a shirt; shame and terror possess him by turns, and only waking can relieve him from his misery. Thus stood Emilio's soul in the presence of his mistress. Hitherto that soul had known only the fairest flowers of feeling; a debauch had plunged it into dishonour. This none knew but he, for the beautiful Florentine ascribed so many virtues to her lover that the man she adored could not but be incapable of any stain.

As Emilio had not taken her hand, the Duchess pushed her fingers through his hair that the singer had kissed. Then she perceived that Emilio's hand was clammy and his brow moist.

'What ails you?' she asked, in a voice to which tenderness gave the sweetness of a flute.

'Never till this moment have I known how much I love you,' he replied.

'Well, dear idol, what would you have?' said she.

'What have I done to make her ask that?' he wondered to himself.

'Emilio, what letter was that which you threw into the lagoon?'

'Vendramini's. I had not read it to the end, or I should never have gone to my palazzo, and there have met the Duke; for no doubt it told me all about it.'

Massimilla turned pale, but a caress from Emilio reassured her.

'Stay with me all day; we will go to the opera together. We will not set out for Friuli; your presence will no doubt enable me to endure Cataneo's,' said Massimilla.

Though this would be torment to her lover's soul, he consented with apparent joy.

If anything can give us a foretaste of what the damned will suffer on finding themselves so unworthy of God, is it not the state a young man, as yet unpolluted, in the presence of a mistress he reveres, while he still feels on his lips the taste of infidelity, and brings into the sanctuary of the divinity he worships the tainted atmosphere of the courtesan?

Baader, who in his lectures eliminated things divine by erotic imagery, had no doubt observed, like some Catholic writers, the intimate resemblance between human and heavenly love.

This distress of mind cast a hue of melancholy over the pleasure the young Venetian felt in his mistress's presence. A woman's instinct has amazing aptitude for harmony of feeling; it assumes the hue, it vibrates to the note suggested by her lover. The pungent flavour of coquettish spice is far indeed from spurring affection so much as this gentle sympathy of tenderness. The smartness of a coquette too clearly marks opposition; however transient it is displeasing; but this intimate comprehension shows a perfect fusion of souls. The hapless Emilio was touched by the unspoken divination which led the Duchess to pity a fault unknown to her.

Massimilla, feeling that her strength lay in the absence of any sensual side to her love, could allow herself to be expansive; she boldly and confidently poured out her angelic spirit, she stripped it bare, just as during that diabolical night, la Tinti had displayed the soft lines of her body, and her firm, elastic flesh. In Emilio's eyes there was as it were a conflict between the saintly love of this white soul and that of the vehement and muscular Sicilian.

The day was spent in long looks following on deep meditations. Each of them gauged the depths of tender feeling, and found it bottomless; a conviction that brought fond words to their lips. Modesty, the goddess who in a moment of forgetfulness with Love, was the mother of Coquettishness, need not have put her hand before her face as she looked at these lovers. As a crowning joy, an orgy of happiness, Massimilla pillowed Emilio's head in her arms, and now and then ventured to press her lips to his; but only as a bird dips its beak into the clear waters of a spring, looking round lest it should be seen. Their fancy worked upon this kiss, as a composer develops a subject by the endless resources of music, and it produced in them such tumultuous and vibrating echoes as fevered their blood.

The Idea must always be stronger than the Fact, otherwise desire would be less perfect than satisfaction, and it is in fact the stronger, — it gives birth to wit. And, indeed, they were perfectly happy; for enjoyment must always take something off happiness. Married in heaven alone, these two lovers admired each other in their purest aspect, — that of two souls incandescent, and united in celestial light, radiant to the eyes that faith has touched; and, above all, filled with the rapture which the brush of a Raphael, a Titian, a Murillo, has depicted, and which those who have ever known it, taste again as they gaze at those paintings. Do not such peerless spirits scorn the

coarser joys lavished by the Sicilian singer — the material expression of that angelic union?

These noble thoughts were in the Prince's mind as he reposed in heavenly calm on Massimilla's cool, soft, white bosom, under the gentle radiance of her eyes veiled by long, bright lashes; and he gave himself up to this dream of an ideal orgy. At such a moment, Massimilla was as one of the Virgin visions seen in dreams, which vanish at cock-crow, but whom we recognise when we find them again in their realm of glory, — in the works of some great painters of Heaven.

In the evening the lovers went to the theatre. This is the way of Italian life: love in the morning; music in the evening; the night for sleep. How far preferable is this existence to that of a country where every one expends his lungs and strength in politics, without contributing any more, single-handed, to the progress of affairs than a grain of sand can make a cloud of dust. Liberty, in those strange lands, consists in the right to squabble over public concerns, to take care of oneself, to waste time in patriotic undertakings each more futile than the last, inasmuch as they all weaken that noble, holy self-concern which is the parent of all great human achievement. At Venice, on the contrary, love and its myriad ties, the sweet business of real happiness, fills up all the time.

In that country, love is so much a matter of course that the Duchess was regarded as a wonder; for, in spite of her violent attachment to Emilio, everybody was confident of her immaculate purity. And women gave their sincere pity to the poor young man, who was regarded as a victim to the virtue of his lady-love. At the same time, no one cared to blame the Duchess, for in Italy religion is a power as much respected as love.

Evening after evening Massimilla's box was the first object of every opera-glass, and each woman would say to her lover, as she studied the Duchess and her adorer: —

'How far have they got?'

The lover would examine Emilio, seeking some evidence of success; would find no expression but that of a pure and dejected passion. And throughout the house, as they visited from box to box, the men would say to the ladies: —

'La Cataneo is not yet Emilio's.'

'She is unwise,' said the old women. 'She will tire him out.'

'*Forse!*' (Perhaps) the young wives would reply, with the solemn accent that Italians can infuse into that great word — the answer to many questions here below.

Some women were indignant, thought the whole thing ill-judged, and declared that it was a misapprehension of religion to allow it to smother love.

'My dear, love that poor Emilio,' said the Signora Vulpato to Massimilla, as they met on the stairs in going out.

'I do love him with all my might,' replied the Duchess.

'Then why does not he look happy?'

Massimilla's reply was a little shrug of her shoulders.

We in France — France as the growing mania for English proprieties has made it — can form no idea of the serious interest taken in this affair by Venetian society.

Vendramini alone knew Emilio's secret, which was carefully kept between two men who had, for private pleasure, combined their coats of arms with the motto *Non amici, frates.*

The opening night of the opera season is an event at Venice, as in every capital in Italy. The *Fenice* was crowded.

The five hours of the night that are spent at the theatre fill so important a place in Italian life that it is well to give an account of the customs that have arisen from this manner of spending time.

The boxes in Italy are unlike those of any other country, inasmuch as that elsewhere the women go to be seen, and

that Italian ladies do not care to make a show of themselves. Each box is long and narrow, sloping at an angle to the front and to the passage behind. On each side is a sofa, and at the end stand two arm-chairs, one for the mistress of the box, and the other for a lady friend when she brings one, which she rarely does. Each lady is in fact too much engaged in her own box to call on others, or to wish to see them; also no one cares to introduce a rival. An Italian woman almost always reigns alone in her box; the mothers are not the slaves of their daughters, the daughters have no mother on their hands; thus there are no children, no relations to watch and censure and bore, or cut into a conversation.

In front every box is draped in the same way, with the same silk: from the cornice hang curtains, also all to match; and these remain drawn when the family to whom the box belongs is in mourning. With very few exceptions, and those only at Milan, there is no light inside the box; they are illuminated only from the stage, and from a not very brilliant hanging lustre which, in spite of protests, has been introduced into the house in some towns; still, screened by the curtains, they are never very light, and their arrangement leaves the back of the box so dark that it is very difficult to see what is going on.

The boxes, large enough to accommodate eight or ten persons, are decorated with handsome silks, the ceilings are painted and ornamented in light and pleasing colours; the woodwork is gilt. Ices and sorbets are served there, and sweetmeats; for only the plebeian classes ever have a serious meal. Each box is freehold property, and of considerable value; some are estimated at as much as thirty thousand lire; the Litta family at Milan own three adjoining. These facts sufficiently indicate the importance attributed to this incident of fashionable life.

Conversation reigns supreme in this little apartment, which Stendhal, one of the most ingenious of modern writers, and a

keen student of Italian manners, has called a boudoir with a window opening on to a pit. The music and the spectacle are in fact purely accessory; the real interest of the evening is in the social meeting there, the all-important trivialities of love that are discussed, the assignations held, the anecdotes and gossip that creep in. The theatre is an inexpensive meeting-place for a whole society which is content and amused with studying itself.

The men who are admitted take their seats on one of the sofas, in the order of their arrival. The first comer naturally is next to the mistress of the box, but when both seats are full, if another visitor comes in, the one who has sat longest rises, takes his leave, and departs. All move up one place, and so each in turn is next the sovereign.

This futile gossip, or serious colloquy, these elegant trivialities of Italian life, inevitably imply some general intimacy. The lady may be in full dress or not, as she pleases. She is so completely at home that a stranger who has been received in her box may call on her next day at her residence. The foreign visitor cannot at first understand this life of idle wit, this *dolce far niente* on a background of music. Only long custom and keen observation can ever reveal to a foreigner the meaning of Italian life, which is like the free sky of the south, and where a rich man will not endure a cloud. A man of rank cares little about the management of his fortune; he leaves the details to his stewards (*ragionati*), who rob and ruin him. He has no instinct for politics, and they would presently bore him; he lives exclusively for passion, which fills up all his time; hence the necessity felt by the lady and her lover for being constantly together, either to charm or to keep each other; for the great feature of such a life is the lover, who for five hours is kept under the eye of a woman who has had him at her feet all day. Thus Italian habits allow of perpetual satisfaction, and necessitate a constant study of the

means fitted to insure it, though hidden under apparent light-heartedness.

It is a beautiful life, but a reckless one, and in no country in the world are men so often found worn-out.

The Duchess's box was on the pit tier—*pepiano*, as it is called in Venice; she always sat where the light from the stage fell on her face, so that her handsome head, softly illuminated, stood out against the dark background. The Florentine attracted every gaze by her broad, high brow, as white as snow, crowned with plaits of black hair that gave her a really royal look; by the refinement of her features, resembling the noble tenderness of Andrea del Sarto's heads; by the outline of her face, the setting of her eyes; and by those velvet eyes themselves, which spoke of the rapture of a woman dreaming of happiness, still pure though loving, at once attractive and dignified.

Instead of *Mosé*, in which la Tinti was to have appeared with Genovese, *Il Barbiere* was given, and the tenor was to sing without the celebrated prima donna. The manager announced that he had been obliged to change the opera in consequence of la Tinti's being ill; and the Duke was not to be seen in the theatre.

Was this a clever trick on the part of the management, to secure two full houses by bringing out Genovese and Tinti separately, or was Clarina's indisposition genuine? While this was open to discussion by others, Emilio might be better informed; and though the announcement caused him some remorse, as he remembered the singer's beauty and vehemence, her absence and the Duke's put both the Prince and the Duchess very much at their ease.

And Genovese sang in such a way as to drive out all memories of a night of illicit love, and to prolong the heavenly joys of this blissful day. Happy to be alone to receive the applause of the house, the tenor did his best with the powers which have since achieved European fame. Genovese, then but three and twenty, born at Bergamo,

a pupil of Veluti's and devoted to his art, a fine man, good-looking, clever in apprehending the spirit of a part, was already developing into the great artist destined to win fame and fortune. He had a wild success, — a phrase which is literally exact only in Italy, where the applause of the house is absolutely frenzied when a singer procures it enjoyment.

Some of the Prince's friends came to congratulate him on coming into his title, and to discuss the news. Only last evening la Tinti, taken by the Duke to the Vulpatos', had sung there, apparently in health as sound as her voice was fine; hence her sudden indisposition gave rise to much comment. It was rumoured at the Café Florian that Genovese was desperately in love with Clarina; that she was only anxious to avoid his declarations, and that the manager had tried in vain to induce her to appear with him. The Austrian General, on the other hand, asserted that it was the Duke who was ill, that the prima donna was nursing him, and that Genovese had been commanded to make amends to the public.

The Duchess owed this visit from the Austrian General to the fact that a French physician had come to Venice whom the General wished to introduce to her. The Prince, seeing Vendramin wandering about the *parterre*, went out for a few minutes of confidential talk with his friend, whom he had not seen for three months; and as they walked round the gangway which divides the seats in the pit from the lowest tier of boxes, he had an opportunity of observing Massimilla's reception of the foreigner.

'Who is that Frenchman?' asked the Prince.

'A physician sent for by Cataneo, who wants to know how long he is likely to live,' said Vendramin. 'The Frenchman is waiting for Malfatti, with whom he is to hold a consultation.'

Like every Italian woman who is in love, the Duchess kept her eyes fixed on Emilio; for in that land a woman

is so wholly wrapt up in her lover that it is difficult to detect an expressive glance directed at anybody else.

'Caro,' said the Prince to his friend, 'remember I slept at your house last night.'

'Have you triumphed?' said Vendramin, putting his arm round Emilio's waist.

'No; but I hope I may some day be happy with Massimilla.'

'Well,' replied Marco, 'then you will be the most envied man on earth. The Duchess is the most perfect woman in Italy. To me, seeing things as I do through the dazzling medium of opium, she seems the very highest expression of art; for nature, without knowing it, has made her a Raphael picture. Your passion gives no umbrage to Cataneo, who has handed over to me a thousand crowns, which I am to give to you.'

'Well,' added Emilio, 'whatever you may hear said, I sleep every night at your house. Come, for every minute spent away from her, when I might be with her, is torment.'

Emilio took his seat at the back of the box and remained there in silence, listening to the Duchess, enchanted by her wit and beauty. It was for him, and not out of vanity, that Massimilla lavished the charms of her conversation bright with Italian wit, in which sarcasm lashed things but not persons, laughter attacked nothing that was not laughable, mere trifles were seasoned with Attic salt.

Anywhere else she might have been tiresome. The Italians, an eminently intelligent race, have no fancy for displaying their talents where they are not in demand; their chat is perfectly simple and effortless, it never makes play, as in France, under the lead of a fencing master, each one flourishing his foil, or, if he has nothing to say, sitting humiliated.

Conversation sparkles with a delicate and subtle satire that plays gracefully with familiar facts; and instead of a compromising epigram an Italian has a glance or a smile of

unutterable meaning. They think — and they are right — that to be expected to understand ideas when they only seek enjoyment, is a bore.

Indeed, la Vulpato had said to Massimilla: —

'If you loved him, you would not talk so well.'

Emilio took no part in the conversation; he listened and gazed. This reserve might have led foreigners to suppose that the Prince was a man of no intelligence, — their impression very commonly of an Italian in love, — whereas he was simply a lover up to his ears in rapture. Vendramin sat down by Emilio, opposite the Frenchman, who, as the stranger, occupied the corner facing the Duchess.

'Is that gentleman drunk?' said the physician in an undertone to Massimilla, after looking at Vendramin.

'Yes,' replied she, simply.

In that land of passion, each passion bears its excuse in itself, and gracious indulgence is shown to every form of error. The Duchess sighed deeply, and an expression of suppressed pain passed over her features.

'You will see strange things in our country, Monsieur,' she went on. 'Vendramin lives on opium, as this one lives on love, and that one buries himself in learning; most young men have a passion for a dancer, as older men are miserly. We all create some happiness or some madness for ourselves.'

'Because you all want to divert your minds from some fixed idea, for which a revolution would be a radical cure,' replied the physician. 'The Genoese regrets his republic, the Milanese pines for his independence, the Piemontese longs for a constitutional government, the Romagna cries for liberty ——'

'Of which it knows nothing,' interrupted the Duchess. 'Alas! there are men in Italy so stupid as to long for your idiotic Charter, which destroys the influence of woman. Most of my fellow-countrywomen must need read your French books — useless rhodomontade ——'

'Useless!' cried the Frenchman.

'Why, Monsieur,' the Duchess went on, 'what can you find in a book that is better than what we have in our hearts? Italy is mad.'

'I cannot see that a people is mad because it wishes to be its own master,' said the physician.

'Good Heavens!' exclaimed the Duchess, eagerly, 'does not that mean paying with a great deal of bloodshed for the right of quarrelling, as you do, over crazy ideas?'

'Then you approve of despotism?' said the physician.

'Why should I not approve of a system of government which, by depriving us of books and odious politics, leaves men entirely to us?'

'I had thought that the Italians were more patriotic,' said the Frenchman.

Massimilla laughed so slyly that her interlocutor could not distinguish mockery from serious meaning, nor her real opinion from ironical criticism.

'Then you are not a liberal?' said he.

'Heaven preserve me!' said she. 'I can imagine nothing in worse taste than such opinions in a woman. Could you love a woman whose heart was occupied by all mankind?'

'Those who love are naturally aristocrats,' the Austrian General observed, with a smile.

'As I came into the theatre,' the Frenchman observed, 'you were the first person I saw; and I remarked to his Excellency that if there was a woman who could personify a nation it was you. But I grieve to discover that, though you represent its divine beauty, you have not the constitutional spirit.'

'Are you not bound,' said the Duchess, pointing to the ballet now being danced, 'to find all our dancers detestable and our singers atrocious? Paris and London rob us of all our leading stars. Paris passes judgment on them, and London pays them. Genovese and la Tinti will not be left to us for six months ——'

At this juncture, the Austrian left the box. Vendramin, the Prince, and the two other Italians exchanged a look and a smile, glancing at the French physician. He, for a moment, felt doubtful of himself, — a rare thing in a Frenchman, — fancying he had said or done something incongruous; but the riddle was immediately solved.

'Do you think it would be judicious,' said Emilio, 'if we spoke our mind in the presence of our masters?'

'You are in a land of slaves,' said the Duchess, in a tone and with a droop of the head which gave her at once the look for which the physician had sought in vain. 'Vendramin,' she went on, speaking so that only the stranger could hear her, 'took to smoking opium, a villainous idea suggested to him by an Englishman who, for other reasons than his, craved an easy death — not death as men see it in the form of a skeleton, but death draped with the frippery you in France call a flag — a maiden form crowned with flowers or laurels; she appears in a cloud of gunpowder borne on the flight of a cannon-ball — or else stretched on a bed between two courtesans; or again, she rises in the steam of a bowl of punch, or the dazzling vapour of a diamond — but a diamond in the form of carbon.

'Whenever Vendramin chooses, for three Austrian lire, he can be a Venetian Captain, he can sail in the galleys of the Republic, and conquer the gilded domes of Constantinople. Then he can lounge on the divans in the Seraglio among the Sultan's wives, while the Grand Signor himself is the slave of the Venetian conqueror. He returns to restore his palazzo with the spoils of the Ottoman Empire. He can quit the women of the East for the doubly masked intrigues of his beloved Venetians, and fancy that he dreads the jealousy which has ceased to exist.

'For three zwanziger he can transport himself into the Council of Ten, can wield there terrible power, and leave the Doges' Palace to sleep under the watch of a pair of flashing eyes, or to climb a balcony from which a fair hand

has hung a silken ladder. He can love a woman to whom opium lends such poetic grace as we women of flesh and blood could never show.

'Presently he turns over, and he is face to face with the dreadful frown of the senator, who holds a dagger. He hears the blade plunged into his mistress's heart. She dies smiling on him; for she has saved him.

'And she is a happy woman!' added the Duchess, looking at Emilio.

'He escapes and flies to command the Dalmatians, to conquer the Illyrian coast for his beloved Venice. His glory wins him forgiveness, and he enjoys a life of domestic happiness, — a home, a winter evening, a young wife, and charming children, who pray to San Marco under the care of an old nurse. Yes, for three francs' worth of opium he furnishes our empty arsenal, he watches convoys of merchandise coming in, going to the four quarters of the world. The forces of modern industry no longer reign in London, but in his own Venice, where the hanging gardens of Semiramis, the Temple of Jerusalem, the marvels of Rome, live once more. He adds to the glories of the middle ages by the labours of steam, by new masterpieces of art under the protection of Venice, who protected it of old. Monuments and nations crowd into his little brain; there is room for them all. Empires and cities and revolutions come and vanish in the course of a few hours, while Venice alone expands and lives; for the Venice of his dreams is the empress of the seas. She has two millions of inhabitants, the sceptre of Italy, the mastery of the Mediterranean and the Indies!'

'What an opera is the brain of man!' What an unfathomed abyss! — even to those who, like Gall, have mapped it out,' cried the physician.

'Dear Duchess,' said Vendramin, 'do not omit the last service that my elixir will do me. After hearing ravishing voices and imbibing music through every pore, after expe-

riencing the keenest pleasures and the fiercest delights of Mahomet's paradise, I see none but the most terrible images. I have visions of my beloved Venice full of children's faces, distorted, like those of the dying; of women covered with dreadful wounds, torn and wailing; of men mangled and crushed by the copper sides of crashing vessels. I begin to see Venice as she is, shrouded in crape, stripped, robbed, destitute. Pale phantoms wander through her streets!

'Already the Austrian soldiers are grinning over me, already my visionary life is drifting into real life; whereas six months ago real life was the bad dream, and the life of opium held love and bliss, important affairs and political interests. Alas! To my grief, I see the dawn over my tomb, where truth and falsehood mingle in a dubious light, which is neither day nor darkness, but partakes of both.'

'So you see that in this head there is too much patriotism,' said the Prince, laying his hand on the thick black curls that fell on Vendramin's brow.

'Oh, if he loves us he will give up his dreadful opium!' said Massimilla.

'I will cure your friend,' said the Frenchman.

'Achieve that, and we shall love you,' said the Duchess. 'But if on your return to France you do not calumniate us, we shall love you even better. The hapless Italians are too much crushed by foreign dominion to be fairly judged — for we have known yours,' she added, with a smile.

'It was more generous than Austria's,' said the physician, eagerly.

'Austria squeezes and gives us nothing back, and you squeezed to enlarge and beautify our towns; you stimulated us by giving us an army. You thought you could keep Italy, and they expect to lose it — there lies the difference.

'The Austrians provide us with a sort of ease that is as

stultifying and heavy as themselves, while you overwhelmed us by your devouring energy. But whether we die of tonics or of narcotics, what does it matter? It is death all the same, Monsieur le docteur.'

'Unhappy Italy! In my eyes she is like a beautiful woman whom France ought to protect by making her his mistress,' exclaimed the Frenchman.

'But you could not love us as we wish to be loved,' said the Duchess, smiling. 'We want to be free. But the liberty I crave is not your ignoble and middle-class liberalism, which would kill all art. I ask,' said she, in a tone that thrilled through the box, — 'that is to say, I would ask, — that each Italian republic should be resuscitated, with its nobles, its citizens, its special privileges for each caste. I would have the old aristocratic republics once more with their intestine warfare and rivalry that gave birth to the noblest works of art, that created politics, that raised up the great princely houses. By extending the action of one government over a vast expanse of country it is frittered down. The Italian republics were the glory of Europe in the middle ages. Why has Italy succumbed when the Swiss, who were her porters, have triumphed?'

'The Swiss republics,' said the doctor, 'were worthy housewives, busy with their own little concerns, and neither having any cause for envying another. Your republics were haughty queens, preferring to sell themselves rather than bow to a neighbour; they fell too low ever to rise again. The Guelphs are triumphant.'

'Do not pity us too much,' said the Duchess, in a voice that made the two friends start. 'We are still supreme. Even in the depths of her misfortune Italy governs through the choicer spirits that abound in her cities.

'Unfortunately the greater number of her geniuses learn to understand life so quickly that they lie sunk in poverty-stricken pleasure. As for those who are willing to play the melancholy game for immortality, they know how to get

at your gold and to secure your praises. Aye, in this land — pitied for its fallen state by travelled simpletons and hypocritical poets, while its character is traduced by politicians — in this land, which appears so languid, powerless, and ruinous, worn-out rather than old, there are puissant brains in every branch of life, genius throwing out vigorous shoots as an old vine-stock throws out canes productive of delicious fruit. This race of ancient rulers still gives birth to kings — Lagrange, Volta, Rasori, Canova, Rossini, Bartolini, Galvani, Vigano, Beccaria, Cicognara, Corvetto. These Italians are masters of the scientific peaks on which they stand, or of the arts to which they devote themselves. To say nothing of the singers and executants who captivate Europe by their amazing perfection: Taglioni, Paganini, and the rest. Italy still rules the world which will always come to worship her.

'Go to Florian's to-night; you will find in Capraja one of our cleverest men, but in love with obscurity. No one but the Duke, my master, understands music so thoroughly as he does; indeed he is known here as *il Fanatico*.'

After sitting a few minutes listening to the eager war of words between the physician and the Duchess, who showed much ingenious eloquence, the Italians, one by one, took leave, and went off to tell the news in every box, that la Cataneo, who was regarded as a woman of great wit and spirit, had, on the question of Italy, defeated a famous French doctor. This was the talk of the evening.

As soon as the Frenchman found himself alone with the Duchess and the Prince, he understood that they were to be left together, and took leave. Massimilla bowed with a bend of the neck that placed him at such a distance that this salute might have secured her the man's hatred, if he could have ignored the charm of her eloquence and beauty.

Thus at the end of the opera, Emilio and Massimilla

were alone, and holding hands they listened together to the duet that finishes *Il Barbiere*.

'There is nothing but music to express love,' said the Duchess, moved by that song as of two rapturous nightingales.

A tear twinkled in Emilio's eye; Massimilla, sublime in such beauty as beams in Raphael's Saint-Cecilia, pressed his hand, their knees touched, there was, as it seemed, the blossom of a kiss on her lips. The Prince saw on her blushing face a glow of joy like that which on a summer's day shines down on the golden harvest; his heart seemed bursting with the tide of blood that rushed to it. He fancied he could hear an angelic chorus of voices, and he would have given his life to feel the fire of passion which at this hour last night had filled him for the odious Clarina; but he was at the moment hardly conscious of having a body.

Massimilla, much distressed, ascribed this tear, in her guilelessness, to the remark she had made as to Genovese's cavatina.

'But, *Carino*,' said she in Emilio's ear, 'are not you as far better than every expression of love, as cause is superior to effect?'

After handing the Duchess to her gondola, Emilio waited for Vendramin to go to Florian's.

The Café Florian at Venice is a quite undefinable institution. Merchants transact their business there, and lawyers meet to talk over their most difficult cases. Florian's is at once an Exchange, a green-room, a newspaper office, a club, a confessional,—and it is so well adapted to the needs of the place that some Venetian women never know what their husband's business may be, for, if they have a letter to write, they go to write it there.

Spies, of course, abound at Florian's; but their presence only sharpens Venetian wits, which may here exercise the

discretion once so famous. A great many persons spend the whole day at Florian's; in fact, to some men Florian's is so much a matter of necessity, that between the acts of an opera they leave the ladies in their boxes and take a turn to hear what is going on there.

While the two friends were walking in the narrow streets of the Merceria they did not speak, for there were too many people; but as they turned into the Piazza di San Marco, the Prince said: —

'Do not go at once to the café. Let us walk about; I want to talk to you.'

He related his adventure with Clarina and explained his position. To Vendramin Emilio's despair seemed so nearly allied to madness that he promised to cure him completely if only he would give him *carte blanche* to deal with Massimilla. This ray of hope came just in time to save Emilio from drowning himself that night; for, indeed, as he remembered the singer, he felt a horrible wish to go back to her.

The two friends then went to an inner room at Florian's, where they listened to the conversation of some of the superior men of the town, who discoursed the subjects of the day. The most interesting of these were, in the first place, the eccentricities of Lord Byron, of whom the Venetians made great sport; then Cataneo's attachment for la Tinti, for which no reason could be assigned after twenty different causes had been suggested; then Genovese's début; finally, the tilting match between the Duchess and the French doctor. Just as the discussion had become vehemently musical, Duke Cataneo made his appearance. He bowed very courteously to Emilio, which seemed so natural that no one noticed it, and Emilio bowed gravely in return. Cataneo looked round to see if there was anybody he knew, recognised Vendramin and greeted him, bowed to his banker, a rich patrician, and finally to the man who happened to be speaking, — a celebrated musical

fanatic, a friend of the Comtessa Albrizzi. Like some others who frequented Florian's, his mode of life was absolutely unknown, so carefully did he conceal it. Nothing was known about him but what he chose to tell.

This was Capraja, the nobleman whom the Duchess had mentioned to the French doctor. This Venetian was one of a class of dreamers whose powerful minds divine everything. He was an eccentric theorist, and cared no more for celebrity than for a broken pipe.

His life was in accordance with his ideas. Capraja made his appearance at about ten every morning under the *Procuratie*, without any one knowing whence he came. He lounged about Venice, smoking cigars. He regularly went to the Fenice, sitting in the pit-stalls, and between the acts went round to Florian's, where he took three or four cups of coffee a day; and he ended the evening at the café, never leaving it till about two in the morning. Twelve hundred francs a year paid all his expenses; he ate but one meal a day at an eating-house in the Merceria, where the cook had his dinner ready for him at a fixed hour, on a little table at the back of the shop; the pastry-cook's daughter herself prepared his stuffed oysters, provided him with cigars, and took care of his money. By his advice, this girl, though she was very handsome, would never countenance a lover, lived very steadily, and still wore the old Venetian costume. This purely-bred Venetian girl was twelve years old when Capraja first took an interest in her, and six and twenty when he died. She was very fond of him, though he had never even kissed her hand or her brow, and she knew nothing whatever of the poor old nobleman's intentions with regard to her. The girl had at last as complete control of the old gentleman as a mother has of her child; she would tell him when he wanted clean linen; next day he would come without a shirt, and she would give him a clean one to put on in the morning.

He never looked at a woman either in the theatre or out walking. Though he was the descendant of an old patrician family, he never thought his rank worth mentioning. But at night, after twelve, he awoke from his apathy, talked, and showed that he had seen and heard everything. This peaceful Diogenes, quite incapable of explaining his tenets, half a Turk, half a Venetian, was thick-set, short, and fat; he had a Doge's sharp nose, an inquisitive, satirical eye, and a discreet though smiling mouth.

When he died, it became known that he had lived in a little den near San Benedetto. He had two million francs invested in the funds of various countries of Europe, and had left the interest untouched ever since he had first bought the securities in 1814, so the sum was now enormous, alike from the increased value of the capital and the accumulated interest. All this money was left to the pastry-cook's daughter.

'Genovese,' he was saying, 'will do wonders. Whether he really understands the great end of music, or acts only on instinct, I know not; but he is the first singer who ever satisfied me. I shall not die without hearing a *cadenza* executed as I have heard them in my dreams, waking with a feeling as though the sounds were floating in the air. The clear *cadenza* is the highest achievement of art; it is the arabesque, decorating the finest room in the house; a shade too little and it is nothing, a touch too much and all is confusion. Its task is to awake in the soul a thousand dormant ideas; it flies up, and sweeps through space, scattering seeds in the air to be taken in by our ears and blossom in our heart. Believe me, in painting his Saint-Cecilia, Raphael gave the preference to music over poetry. And he was right; music appeals to the heart, whereas writing is addressed to the intellect; it communicates ideas directly, like a perfume. The singer's voice impinges not on the mind, not on the memory of

happiness, but on the first principle of thought; it stirs the elements of sensation.

'It is a grievous thing that the populace should have compelled musicians to adapt their expression to words, to factitious emotions; but then they were not otherwise intelligible to the vulgar. Thus the *cadenza* is the only thing left to the lovers of pure music, the devotees of unfettered art. To-night, as I listened to that last *cavatina*, I felt as if I were beckoned by a fair creature whose look alone had made me young again. The enchantress placed a crown on my brow, and led me to the ivory door through which we pass to the mysterious land of day-dreams. I owe it to Genovese that I escaped for a few minutes from this old husk — minutes, short no doubt by the clock, but very long by the record of sensation. For a brief spring-time, scented with roses, I was young again — and beloved!'

'But you are mistaken, *caro* Capraja,' said the Duke. 'There is in music an effect yet more magical than that of the *cadenza*.'

'What is that?' asked Capraja.

'The unison of two voices, or of a voice and a violin, — the instrument which has tones most nearly resembling those of the human voice,' replied Cataneo. 'This perfect concord bears us on to the very heart of life, on the tide of elements which can resuscitate rapture and carry man up to the centre of the luminous sphere where his mind can command the whole universe. You still need a *thema*, Capraja, but the pure element is enough for me. You need that the current should flow through the myriad canals of the machine to fall in dazzling cascades, while I am content with the pure tranquil pool. My eye gazes across a lake without a ripple. I can embrace the infinite.'

'Speak no more, Cataneo,' said Capraja, haughtily. 'What! Do you fail to see the fairy, who, in her swift rush through the sparkling atmosphere, collects and binds with the golden thread of harmony, the gems of melody

she smilingly sheds on us? Have you never felt the touch of her magic wand, as she says to Curiosity, "Awake!" The divinity rises up radiant from the depths of the brain; she flies to her store of wonders and fingers them lightly as an organist touches the keys. Suddenly, up starts Memory, bringing us the roses of the past, divinely preserved and still fresh. The mistress of our youth revives, and strokes the young man's hair. Our heart, too full, overflows; we see the flowery banks of the torrent of love. Every burning bush we ever knew blazes afresh, and repeats the heavenly words we once heard and understood. The voice rolls on; it embraces in its rapid turns those fugitive horizons, and they shrink away; they vanish, eclipsed by newer and deeper joys — those of an unrevealed future, to which the fairy points as she returns to the blue heaven.'

'And you,' retorted Cataneo, 'have you never seen the direct ray of a star opening the vistas above; have you never mounted on that beam which guides you to the sky, to the heart of the first causes which move the worlds?'

To their hearers, the Duke and Capraja were playing a game of which the premisses were unknown.

'Genovese's voice thrills through every fibre,' said Capraja.

'And la Tinti's fires the blood,' replied the Duke.

'What a paraphrase of happy love is that *cavatina!* Capraja went on. 'Ah! Rossini was young when he wrote that interpretation of effervescent ecstasy. My heart filled with renewed blood, a thousand cravings tingled in my veins. Never have sounds more angelic delivered me more completely from my earthly bonds! Never did the fairy wave more beautiful arms, smile more invitingly, lift her tunic more cunningly to display an ankle, raising the curtain that hides my other life!'

'To-morrow, my old friend,' replied Cataneo, 'you shall ride on the back of a dazzling, white swan, who will show

you the loveliest land there is; you shall see the springtime as children see it. Your heart shall open to the radiance of a new sun; you shall sleep on crimson silk, under the gaze of a Madonna; you shall feel like a happy lover gently kissed by a nymph whose bare feet you still may see, but who is about to vanish. That swan will be the voice of Genovese, if he can unite it to its Leda, the voice of Clarina. To-morrow night we are to hear *Mosé*, the grandest opera produced by Italy's greatest genius.'

All present left the conversation to the Duke and Capraja, not wishing to be the victims of mystification. Only Vendramin and the French doctor listened to them for a few minutes. The opium-smoker understood these poetic flights; he had the key of the palace where those two sensuous imaginations were wandering. The doctor, too, tried to understand, and he understood, for he was one of the Pleiades of genius belonging to the Paris school of medicine, from which a true physician comes out as much a metaphysician as an accomplished analyst.

'Do you understand them?' said Emilio to Vendramin, as they left the café at two in the morning.

'Yes, my dear boy,' said Vendramin, taking Emilio home with him. 'Those two men are of the legion of unearthly spirits to whom it is given here below to escape from the wrappings of the flesh, who can fly on the shoulders of the queen of witchcraft up to the blue empyrean where the sublime marvels are wrought of the intellectual life; they, by the power of art, can soar whither your immense love carries you, whither opium transports me. Then none can understand them but those who are like them.

'I, who can inspire my soul by such base means, who can pack a hundred years of life into a single night, I can understand those lofty spirits when they talk of that glorious land, deemed a realm of chimeras by some who think themselves wise; but the realm of reality to us whom they think

mad. Well, the Duke and Capraja, who were acquainted at Naples, — where Cataneo was born, — are mad about music.'

'But what is that strange system that Capraja was eager to explain to the Duke? Did you understand?'

'Yes,' replied Vendramin. 'Capraja's great friend is a musician from Cremona, lodging in the Capello palace, who has a theory that sounds meet with an element in man, analogous to that which produces the phenomena of light, and which produces ideas. According to him, man has within him keys acted on by sound, and corresponding to his nerve-centres, where ideas and sensations take their rise. Capraja, who regards the arts as an assemblage of means by which he can harmonise, in himself, all external nature with another mysterious nature that he calls the inner life, shares all the ideas of this instrument-maker, who at this moment is composing an opera.

'Conceive of a sublime creation, wherein the marvels of the visible universe are reproduced with immeasurable grandeur, lightness, swiftness, and extension; wherein sensation is infinite, and whither certain privileged natures, possessed of divine powers, are able to penetrate, and you will have some notion of the ecstatic joys of which Cataneo and Capraja were speaking; both poets, each for himself alone. Only, in matters of the intellect, as soon as a man can rise above the sphere where plastic art is produced by a process of imitation, and enter into that transcendental sphere of abstractions where everything is understood as an elementary principle, and seen in the omnipotence of results, that man is no longer intelligible to ordinary minds.'

'You have thus explained my love for Massimilla,' said Emilio. 'There is in me, my friend, a force which awakes under the fire of her look, at her lightest touch, and wafts me to a world of light where effects are produced of which I dare not speak. It has seemed to me often that the delicate tissue of her skin has stamped flowers on

mine as her hand lies on my hand. Her words play on those inner keys in me, of which you spoke. Desire excites my brain, stirring that invisible world, instead of exciting my passive flesh; the air seems red and sparkling, unknown perfumes of indescribable strength relax my sinews, roses wreathe my temples, and I feel as though my blood were escaping through opened arteries, so complete is my inanition.'

'That is the effect on me of smoking opium,' replied Vendramin.

'Then do you wish to die?' cried Emilio, in alarm.

'With Venice!' said Vendramin, waving his hand in the direction of San Marco. 'Can you see a single pinnacle or spire that stands straight? Do you not perceive that the sea is claiming its prey?'

The Prince bent his head; he dared no more speak to his friend of love.

To know what a free country means, you must have travelled in a conquered land.

When they reached the Palazzo Vendramin, they saw a gondola moored at the water-gate. The Prince put his arm round Vendramin and clasped him affectionately, saying: —

'Good night to you, my dear fellow!'

'What! a woman? for me, whose only love is Venice?' exclaimed Marco.

At this instant the gondolier, who was leaning against a column, recognising the man he was to look out for, murmured in Emilio's ear: —

'The Duchess, Monseigneur.'

Emilio sprang into the gondola, where he was seized in a pair of soft arms — an embrace of iron — and dragged down on to the cushions, where he felt the heaving bosom of an ardent woman. And then he was no more Emilio, but Clarina's lover; for his ideas and feelings were so bewildering that he yielded as if stupefied by her first kiss.

'Forgive this trick, my beloved,' said the Sicilian. 'I shall die if you do not come with me.'

And the gondola flew over the secret water.

At half-past seven on the following evening, the spectators were again in their places in the theatre, excepting that those in the pit always took their chances of where they might sit. Old Capraja was in Cataneo's box.

Before the overture the Duke paid a call on the Duchess; he made a point of standing behind her and leaving the front seat to Emilio next the Duchess. He made a few trivial remarks, without sarcasm or bitterness, and with as polite a manner as if he were visiting a stranger.

But in spite of his efforts to seem amiable and natural, the Prince could not control his expression, which was deeply anxious. Bystanders would have ascribed such a change in his usually placid features to jealousy. The Duchess no doubt shared Emilio's feelings; she looked gloomy and was evidently depressed. The Duke, uncomfortable enough between two sulky people, took advantage of the French doctor's entrance to slip away.

'Monsieur,' said Cataneo to his physician before dropping the curtain over the entrance to the box, 'you will hear to-night a grand musical poem, not easy of comprehension at a first hearing. But in leaving you with the Duchess I know that you can have no more competent interpreter, for she is my pupil.'

The doctor, like the Duke, was struck by the expression stamped on the faces of the lovers, a look of pining despair.

'Then does an Italian opera need a guide to it?' he asked Massimilla, with a smile.

Recalled by this question to her duties as mistress of the box, the Duchess tried to chase away the clouds that darkened her brow, and replied, with eager haste, to open a conversation in which she might vent her irritation: —

'This is not so much an opera, Monsieur,' said she, 'as an oratorio — a work which is in fact not unlike a most magnificent edifice, and I shall with pleasure be your guide. Believe me, it will not be too much to give all your mind to our great Rossini, for you need to be at once a poet and a musician to appreciate the whole bearing of such a work.

'You belong to a race whose language and genius are too practical for it to enter into music without an effort; but France is too intellectual not to learn to love it and cultivate it, and to succeed in that as in everything else. Also, it must be acknowledged that music, as created by Lulli, Rameau, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Cimarosa, Paisiello, and Rossini, and as it will be carried on by the great geniuses of the future, is a new art, unknown to former generations; they had indeed no such variety of instruments as we have now, and were unaware of the harmonies on which the flowers of melody now blossom as on some rich soil.

'So novel an art demands study in the public, study of a kind that may develop the feelings to which music appeals. That sentiment hardly exists as yet among you — a nation given up to philosophical theories, to analysis and discussion, and always torn by civil disturbances. Modern music demands perfect peace; it is the language of loving and sentimental souls, inclined to lofty emotional aspiration.

'That language, a thousand times fuller than the language of words, is to speech what the thought is to its utterance; it arouses sensations and ideas in their primitive form, in that part of us where sensations and ideas have their birth, but leaves them as they are in each of us. That power over our inmost being is one of the grandest facts in music. All other arts present to the mind a definite creation; those of music are indefinite — infinite. We are compelled to accept the ideas of the poet, the painter's picture, the sculptor's statue; but music each one

can interpret at the will of his sorrow or his gladness, his hope or his despair. While other arts restrict our mind by fixing it on a predestined object, music frees it to roam over all nature which it alone has the power of expressing. You shall hear how I interpret Rossini's *Mosé*.'

She leaned across to the Frenchman to speak to him, without being overheard.

'Moses is the liberator of an enslaved race!' said she. 'Remember that, and you will see with what religious hope the whole house will listen to the prayer of the rescued Hebrews, with what a thunder of applause it will respond!'

As the leader raised his bow, Emilio flung himself into a back seat. The Duchess pointed out the place he had left, for the physician to take it. But the Frenchman was far more curious to know what had gone wrong between the lovers than to enter the halls of music built up by the man whom all Italy was applauding — for it was the day of Rossini's triumph in his own country. He was watching the Duchess, and she was talking with a feverish excitement. She reminded him of the Niobe he had admired at Florence: the same dignity in woe, the same physical control; and yet her soul shone through, in the warm flush in her cheeks; and her eyes, where anxiety was disguised under a flash of pride, seemed to scorch the tears away by their fire. Her suppressed grief seemed calmer when she looked at Emilio, who never took his eyes off her; it was easy to see that she was trying to mollify some fierce despair. The state of her feelings gave a certain loftiness to her mind.

Like most women when under the stress of some unusual agitation, she overstepped her ordinary limitations and assumed something of the Pythoness, though still remaining calm and beautiful; for it was the form of her thoughts that was wrung with desperation, not the features of her face. And perhaps she wanted to shine with all her wit to lend some charm to life and detain her lover from death.

When the orchestra had given out the three chords in C major, placed at the opening by the composer to announce that the overture will be sung — for the real overture is the great movement beginning with this stern attack, and ending only when light appears at the command of Moses — the Duchess could not control a little spasmodic start, that showed how entirely the music was in accordance with her concealed distress.

'Those three chords freeze the blood,' said she. 'They announce trouble. Listen attentively to this introduction; the terrible lament of a nation stricken by the hand of God. What wailing! The King, the Queen, their first-born son, all the dignitaries of the kingdom are sighing; they are wounded in their pride, in their conquests; checked in their avarice. Dear Rossini! you have done well to throw this bone to gnaw to the *Tedeschi*, who declared we had no harmony, no science!

'Now you will hear the ominous melody the maestro has engrafted on to this profound harmonic composition, worthy to compare with the most elaborate structures of the Germans, but never fatiguing or tiresome.

'You French, who carried through such a bloodthirsty revolution, who crushed your aristocracy under the paw of the lion mob, on the day when this oratorio is performed in your capital, you will understand this glorious dirge of the victims on whom God is avenging his chosen people. None but an Italian could have written this pregnant and inexhaustible theme — truly Dantesque. Do you think that it is nothing to have such a dream of vengeance, even for a moment? Händel, Sebastian Bach, all you old German masters, nay, even you, great Beethoven, on your knees! Here is the queen of arts, Italy triumphant!'

The Duchess had spoken while the curtain was being raised. And now the physician heard the sublime symphony with which the composer introduces the great Biblical drama. It is to express the sufferings of a whole nation.

Suffering is uniform in its expression, especially physical suffering. Thus, having instinctively felt, like all men of genius, that here there must be no variety of idea, the musician, having hit on his leading phrase, has worked it out in various keys, grouping the masses and the dramatis personæ to take up the theme through modulations and cadences of admirable structure. In such simplicity is power.

'The effect of this strain, depicting the sensations of night and cold in a people accustomed to live in the bright rays of the sun, and sung by the people and their princes, is most impressive. There is something relentless in that slow phrase of music; it is cold and sinister, like an iron bar wielded by some celestial executioner, and dropping in regular rhythm on the limbs of all his victims. As we hear it passing from C minor into G minor, returning to C and again to the dominant G, starting afresh and *fortissimo* on the tonic B flat, drifting into F major and back to C minor, and in each key in turn more ominously terrible, chill, and dark, we are compelled at last to enter into the impression intended by the composer.'

The Frenchman was, in fact, deeply moved when all this united sorrow exploded in the cry:—

'O Nume d' Israel,
Se brami in libertà
Il popol tuo fedel,
Di lui di noi pietà!'

(O God of Israel, if thou wouldst see thy faithful people free, have mercy on them, and on us.)

'Never was a grander synthesis composed of natural effects or a more perfect idealisation of nature. In a great national disaster, each one for a long time bewails himself alone; then, from out of the mass, rises up, here and there, a more emphatic and vehement cry of anguish;

finally, when the misery has fallen on all, it bursts forth like a tempest.

'As soon as they all recognise a common grievance, the dull murmurs of the people become cries of impatience. Rossini has proceeded on this hypothesis. After the outcry in C major, Pharaoh sings his grand recitative: *Mano ultrice di un Dio* (Avenging hand of God), after which the original subject is repeated with more vehement expression. All Egypt appeals to Moses for help.'

The Duchess had taken advantage of the pause for the entrance of Moses and Aaron to give this interpretation of that fine introduction.

'Let them weep!' she added passionately. 'They have done much ill. Expiate your sins, Egyptians, expiate the crimes of your maddened Court! With what amazing skill has this great painter made use of all the gloomy tones of music, of all that is saddest on the musical palette! What creepy darkness! what a mist! Is not your very spirit in mourning? Are you not convinced of the reality of the blackness that lies over the land? Do you not feel that Nature is wrapped in the deepest shades? There are no palm-trees, no Egyptian palaces, no landscape. And what a healing to your soul will the deeply religious strain be of the heaven-sent Healer who will stay this cruel plague! How skilfully is everything wrought up to end in that glorious invocation of Moses to God.

'By a learned elaboration, which Capraja could explain to you, this appeal to heaven is accompanied by brass instruments only; it is that which gives it such a solemn, religious cast. And not merely is the artifice fine in its place; note how fertile in resource is genius. Rossini has derived fresh beauty from the difficulty he himself created. He has the strings in reserve to express daylight when it succeeds to the darkness, and thus produces one of the greatest effects ever achieved in music.

'Till this inimitable genius showed the way never was

such a result obtained with mere *recitative*. We have not, so far, had an air or a duet. The poet has relied on the strength of the idea, on the vividness of his imagery, and the realism of the declamatory passages. This scene of despair, this darkness that may be felt, these cries of anguish, — the whole musical picture is as fine as your great Poussin's *Deluge*.'

Moses waved his staff, and it was light.

'Here, Monsieur, does not the music vie with the sun, whose splendour it has borrowed, with nature, whose phenomena it expresses in every detail?' the Duchess went on, in an undertone. 'Art here reaches its climax; no musician can get beyond this. Do not you hear Egypt waking up after its long torpor? Joy comes in with the day. In what composition, ancient or modern, will you find so grand a passage? The greatest gladness in contrast to the deepest woe! What exclamations! What gleeful notes! The oppressed spirit breathes again. What delirium in the *tremolo* of the orchestra! What a noble *tutti!* This is the rejoicing of a delivered nation. Are you not thrilled with joy?'

The physician, startled by the contrast, was, in fact, clapping his hands, carried away by admiration for one of the finest compositions of modern music.

'*Bravo la Doni!*' said Vendramin, who had heard the Duchess.

'Now the introduction is ended,' said she. 'You have gone through a great sensation,' she added, turning to the Frenchman. 'Your heart is beating; in the depths of your imagination you have a splendid sunrise, flooding with light a whole country that before was cold and dark. Now, would you know the means by which the musician has worked, so as to admire him to-morrow for the secrets of his craft after enjoying the results to-night? What do you suppose produces this effect of daylight — so sudden, so complicated, and so complete? It consists

of a simple chord of C, constantly reiterated, varied only by the chord of 4-6. This reveals the magic of his touch. To show you the glory of light he has worked by the same means that he used to represent darkness and sorrow.

'This dawn in imagery is, in fact, absolutely the same as the natural dawn; for light is one and the same thing everywhere, always alike in itself, the effects varying only with the objects it falls on. Is it not so? Well, the musician has taken for the fundamental basis of his music, for its sole *motif*, a simple chord in C. The sun first sheds its light on the mountain-tops and then in the valleys. In the same way the chord is first heard on the treble string of the violins with boreal mildness; it spreads through the orchestra, it awakes the instruments one by one, and flows among them. Just as light glides from one thing to the next, giving them colour, the music moves on, calling out each rill of harmony till all flow together in the *tutti*.

'The violins, silent until now, give the signal with their tender *tremolo*, softly *agitato* like the first rays of morning. That light, cheerful movement, which caresses the soul, is cleverly supported by chords in the bass, and by a vague *fanfare* on the trumpets, restricted to their lowest notes, so as to give a vivid idea of the last cool shadows that linger in the valleys while the first warm rays touch the heights. Then all the wind is gradually added to strengthen the general harmony. The voices come in with sighs of delight and surprise. At last the brass breaks out, the trumpets sound. Light, the source of all harmony, inundates all nature; every musical resource is produced with a turbulence, a splendour, to compare with that of the Eastern sun. Even the triangle, with its reiterated C, reminds us by its shrill accent and playful rhythm of the song of early birds.

'Thus the same key, freshly treated by the master's

hand, expresses the joy of all nature, while it soothes the grief it uttered before.

'There is the hall-mark of the great genius: Unity. It is the same, but different. In one and the same phrase we find a thousand various feelings of woe, the misery of a nation. In one and the same chord we have all the various incidents of awakening nature, every expression of the nation's joy. These two tremendous passages are soldered into one by the prayer to an ever-living God, author of all things, of that woe and that gladness alike. Now is not that introduction by itself a grand poem?'

'It is, indeed,' said the Frenchman.

'Next comes a quintett such as Rossini can give us. If he was ever justified in giving vent to that flowery, voluptuous grace for which Italian music is blamed, is it not in this charming movement in which each person expresses joy? The enslaved people are delivered, and yet a passion in peril is fain to moan. Pharaoh's son loves a Hebrew woman, and she must leave him. What gives its ravishing charm to this quintett is the return to the homelier feelings of life after the grandiose picture of two stupendous and national emotions: — general misery, general joy, expressed with the magic force stamped on them by divine vengeance and with the miraculous atmosphere of the Bible narrative. Now, was not I right?' added Massimilla, as the noble *stretto* came to a close.

'Voci di giubilo,
D' in'orno eccheggino,
Di pace l' Iride
Per noi spunto.'

(Cries of joy sound about us. The rainbow of peace dawns upon us.)

'How ingeniously the composer has constructed this passage!' she went on, after waiting for a reply. 'He begins with a solo on the horn, of divine sweetness, sup-

ported by *arpeggios* on the harps; for the first voices to be heard in this grand concerted piece are those of Moses and Aaron returning thanks to the true God. Their strain, soft and solemn, reverts to the sublime ideas of the invocation, and mingles, nevertheless, with the joy of the heathen people. This transition combines the heavenly and the earthly in a way which genius alone could invent, giving the *andante* of this quintett a glow of colour that I can only compare to the light thrown by Titian on his Divine Persons. Did you observe the exquisite interweaving of the voices? the clever entrances by which the composer has grouped them round the main idea given out by the orchestra? the learned progressions that prepare us for the festal *allegro?* Did you not get a glimpse, as it were, of dancing groups, the dizzy round of a whole nation escaped from danger? And when the clarionet gives the signal for the *stretto*, — "*Voci di giubilo*," — so brilliant and gay, was not your soul filled with the sacred pyrrhic joy of which David speaks in the Psalms, ascribing it to the hills?'

'Yes, it would make a delightful dance tune,' said the doctor.

'French! French! always French!' exclaimed the Duchess, checked in her exultant mood by this sharp thrust. 'Yes; you would be capable of taking that wonderful burst of noble and dainty rejoicing and turning it into a rigadoon. Sublime poetry finds no mercy in your eyes. The highest genius, — saints, kings, disasters, — all that is most sacred must pass under the rods of caricature. And the vulgarising of great music by turning it into a dance tune is to caricature it. With you, wit kills soul, as argument kills reason.'

They all sat in silence through the *recitative* of Osiride and Membrea, who plot to annul the order given by Pharaoh for the departure of the Hebrews.

'Have I vexed you?' said the physician to the Duchess.

'I should be in despair. Your words are like a magic wand. They unlock the pigeon-holes of my brain, and let out new ideas, vivified by this sublime music.'

'No,' replied she, 'you have praised our great composer after your own fashion. Rossini will be a success with you, for the sake of his witty and sensual gifts. Let us hope that he may find some noble souls, in love with the ideal — which must exist in your fruitful land, — to appreciate the sublimity, the loftiness, of such music. Ah, now we have the famous duet, between Elcia and Osiride!' she exclaimed, and she went on, taking advantage of the triple salvo of applause which hailed la Tinti, as she made her first appearance on the stage.

'If la Tinti has fully understood the part of Elcia, you will hear the frenzied song of a woman torn by her love for her people, and her passion for one of their oppressors, while Osiride, full of mad adoration for his beautiful vassal, tries to detain her. The opera is built up as much on that grand idea as on that of Pharaoh's resistance to the power of God and of liberty; you must enter into it thoroughly or you will not understand this stupendous work.

'Notwithstanding the disfavour you show to the dramas invented by our *libretto* writers, you must allow me to point out the skill with which this one is constructed. The antithesis required in every fine work, and eminently favourable to music, is well worked out. What can be finer than a whole nation demanding liberty, held in bondage by bad faith, upheld by God, and piling marvel on marvel to gain freedom? What more dramatic than the Prince's love for a Hebrew woman, almost justifying treason to the oppressor's power?

'And this is what is expressed in this bold and stupendous musical poem; Rossini has stamped each nation with its fantastic individuality, for we have attributed to them a certain historic grandeur to which every imagination subscribes. The songs of the Hebrews, and their trust in

God, are perpetually contrasted with Pharaoh's shrieks of rage and vain efforts, represented with a strong hand.

'At this moment Osiride, thinking only of love, hopes to detain his mistress by the memories of their joys as lovers; he wants to conquer the attractions of her feeling for her people. Here, then, you will find delicious languour, the glowing sweetness, the voluptuous suggestions of Oriental love, in the air "*Ah! se puoi cosi lasciarmi*," sung by Osiride, and in Elcia's reply, "*Ma perchè cosi straziarmi?*" No; two hearts in such melodious unison could never part,' she went on, looking at the Prince.

'But the lovers are suddenly interrupted by the exultant voice of the Hebrew people in the distance, which recalls Elcia. What a delightful and inspiriting *allegro* is the theme of this march, as the Israelites set out for the desert! No one but Rossini can make wind instruments and trumpets say so much. And is not the art which can express in two phrases all that is meant by the "native land" certainly nearer to heaven than the others? This clarion-call always moves me so deeply that I cannot find words to tell you how cruel it is to an enslaved people to see those who are free march away!'

The Duchess's eyes filled with tears as she listened to the grand movement, which in fact crowns the opera.

'*Dov' è mai quel core amante*,' she murmured in Italian, as la Tinti began the delightful *aria* of the *stretto* in which she implores pity for her grief. 'But what is the matter? The pit are dissatisfied ——'

'Genovese is braying like a stag,' replied the Prince.

In point of fact, this first duet with la Tinti was spoilt by Genovese's utter breakdown. His excellent method, recalling that of Crescentini and Veluti, seemed to desert him completely. A *sostenuto* in the wrong place, an embellishment carried to excess, spoilt the effect; or again a loud climax with no due *crescendo*, an outburst of sound like water tumbling through a suddenly opened sluice,

showed complete and wilful neglect of the laws of good taste.

The pit was in the greatest excitement. The Venetian public believed there was a deliberate plot between Genovese and his friends. La Tinti was recalled and applauded with frenzy, while Genovese had a hint or two warning him of the hostile feeling of the audience. During this scene, highly amusing to a Frenchman, while la Tinti was recalled eleven times to receive alone the frantic acclamations of the house, — Genovese, who was all but hissed, not daring to offer her his hand, — the doctor made a remark to the Duchess as to the *stretto* of the duet.

'In this place,' said he, 'Rossini ought to have expressed the deepest grief, and I find on the contrary an airy movement, a tone of ill-timed cheerfulness.'

'You are right,' said she. 'This mistake is the result of a tyrannous custom which composers are expected to obey. He was thinking more of his prima donna than of Elcia when he wrote that *stretto*. But this evening, even if la Tinti had been more brilliant than ever, I could throw myself so completely into the situation, that the passage, lively as it is, is to me full of sadness.'

The physician looked attentively from the Prince to the Duchess, but could not guess the reason that held them apart, and that made this duet seem to them so heart-rending.

'Now comes a magnificent thing, the scheming of Pharaoh against the Hebrews. The great *aria* "*A rispettarmi apprenda*" (Learn to respect me) is a triumph for Carthagenova, who will express superbly the offended pride and the duplicity of a sovereign. The Throne will speak. He will withdraw the concessions that have been made, he arms himself in wrath. Pharaoh rises to his feet to clutch the prey that is escaping.

'Rossini never wrote anything grander in style, or stamped with more living and irresistible energy. It is a

consummate work, supported by an accompaniment of marvellous orchestration, as indeed is every portion of this opera. The vigour of youth illumines the smallest details.'

The whole house applauded this noble movement, which was admirably rendered by the singer, and thoroughly appreciated by the Venetians.

'In the *finale*,' said the Duchess, 'you hear a repetition of the march, expressive of the joy of deliverance and of faith in God, who allows his people to rush off gleefully to wander in the Desert! What lungs but would be refreshed by the aspirations of a whole nation freed from slavery.

'Oh, beloved and living melodies! Glory to the great genius who has known how to give utterance to such feelings! There is something essentially warlike in that march, proclaiming that the God of armies is on the side of these people. How full of feeling are these strains of thanksgiving! The imagery of the Bible rises up in our mind; this glorious musical *scena* enables us to realize one of the grandest dramas of that ancient and solemn world. The religious form given to some of the voice parts, and the way in which they come in, one by one, to group with the others, express all we have ever imagined of the sacred marvels of that early age of humanity.

'And yet this fine concerted piece is no more than a development of the theme of the march into all its musical outcome. That theme is the inspiring element alike for the orchestra and the voices, for the air, and for the brilliant instrumentation that supports it.

'Elcia now comes to join the crowd; and to give shade to the rejoicing spirit of this number, Rossini has made her utter her regrets. Listen to her *duettino* with Amenofi. Did blighted love ever express itself in lovelier song? It is full of the grace of a *notturno*, of the secret grief of hopeless love. How sad, how sad! The Desert will indeed be a desert to her!

'After this comes the fierce conflict of the Egyptians and

the Hebrews. All their joy is spoiled, their march stopped by the arrival of the Egyptians. Pharaoh's edict is proclaimed in a musical phrase, hollow and dread, which is the leading *motif* of the *finale;* we could fancy that we hear the tramp of the great Egyptian army, surrounding the sacred phalanx of the true God, curling round it, like a long African serpent enveloping its prey. But how beautiful is the lament of the duped and disappointed Hebrews! Though, in truth, it is more Italian than Hebrew. What a superb passage introduces Pharaoh's arrival, when his presence brings the two leaders face to face, and all the moving passions of the drama. The conflict of sentiments in that sublime *ottetto*, where the wrath of Moses meets that of the two Pharaohs, is admirable. What a medley of voices and of unchained furies!

'No grander subject was ever wrought out by a composer. The famous *finale* of *Don Giovanni*, after all, only shows us a libertine at odds with his victims, who invoke the vengeance of Heaven; while here earth and its dominions try to defeat God. Two nations are here face to face. And Rossini, having every means at his command, has made wonderful use of them. He has succeeded in expressing the turmoil of a tremendous storm as a background to the most terrible imprecations, without making it ridiculous. He has achieved it by the use of chords repeated in triple time — a monotonous rhythm of gloomy musical emphasis — and so persistent as to be quite overpowering. The horror of the Egyptians at the torrent of fire, the cries of vengeance from the Hebrews, needed a delicate balance of masses; so note how he has made the development of the orchestral parts follow that of the chorus. The *allegro assai* in C minor is terrible in the midst of that deluge of fire.

'Confess now,' said Massimilla, at the moment when Moses, lifting his rod, brings down the rain of fire, and when the composer puts forth all his powers in the orches-

tra and on the stage, 'that no music ever more perfectly expressed the idea of distress and confusion.'

'They have spread to the pit,' remarked the Frenchman.

'What is it now? The pit is certainly in great excitement,' said the Duchess.

In the *finale*, Genovese, his eyes fixed on la Tinti, had launched into such preposterous flourishes, that the pit, indignant at this interference with their enjoyment, were at a height of uproar. Nothing could be more exasperating to Italian ears than this contrast of good and bad singing. The manager went so far as to appear on the stage, to say that in reply to his remarks to his leading singer, Signor Genovese had replied that he knew not how or by what offence he had lost the countenance of the public, at the very moment when he was endeavouring to achieve perfection in his art.

'Let him be as bad as he was yesterday — that was good enough for us!' roared Capraja, in a rage.

This suggestion put the house into a good humour again.

Contrary to Italian custom, the ballet was not much attended to. In every box the only subject of conversation was Genovese's strange behaviour, and the luckless manager's speech. Those who were admitted behind the scenes went off at once to enquire into the mystery of this performance, and it was presently rumoured that la Tinti had treated her colleague Genovese to a dreadful scene, in which she had accused the tenor of being jealous of her success, of having hindered it by his ridiculous behaviour, and even of trying to spoil her performance by acting passionate devotion. The lady was shedding bitter tears over this catastrophe. She had been hoping, she said, to charm her lover, who was somewhere in the house, though she had failed to discover him.

Without knowing the peaceful course of daily life in Venice at the present day, so devoid of incident that a slight altercation between two lovers, or the transient hus-

kiness of a singer's voice becomes a subject of discussion, regarded of as much importance as politics in England, it is impossible to conceive of the excitement in the theatre and at the Café Florian. La Tinti was in love; la Tinti had been hindered in her performance; Genovese was mad or purposely malignant, inspired by the artist's jealousy so familiar to Italians! What a mine of matter for eager discussion!

The whole pit was talking as men talk at the Bourse, and the result was such a clamour as could not fail to amaze a Frenchman accustomed to the quiet of the Paris theatres. The boxes were in a ferment like the stir of swarming bees.

One man alone remained passive in the turmoil. Emilio Memmi, with his back to the stage and his eyes fixed on Massimilla with a melancholy expression, seemed to live in her gaze; he had not once looked round at the prima donna.

'I need not ask you, *caro carino*, what was the result of my negotiation,' said Vendramin to Emilio. 'Your pure and pious Massimilla has been supremely kind — in short, she has been la Tinti?'

The Prince's reply was a shake of his head, full of the deepest melancholy.

'Your love has not descended from the ethereal spaces where you soar,' said Vendramin, excited by opium. 'It is not yet materialised. This morning, as every day for six months — you felt flowers opening their scented cups under the dome of your skull that had expanded to vast proportions. All your blood moved to your swelling heart that rose to choke your throat. There, in there,' — and he laid his hand on Emilio's breast, — 'you felt rapturous emotions. Massimilla's voice fell on your soul in waves of light; her touch released a thousand imprisoned joys which emerged from the convolutions of your brain to gather about you in clouds, to waft your etherealised body through

the blue air in a purple glow far above the snowy heights, to where the pure love of angels dwells. The smile, the kisses of her lips, wrapped you in a poisoned robe which burnt up the last vestiges of your earthly nature. Her eyes were twin stars that turned you into shadowless light. You knelt together on the palm-branches of heaven, waiting for the gates of Paradise to be opened; but they turned heavily on their hinges, and in your impatience you struck at them, but could not reach them. Your hand touched nothing but clouds more nimble than your desires. Your radiant companion, crowned with white roses like a bride of Heaven, wept at your anguish. Perhaps she was murmuring melodious litanies to the Virgin, while the demoniacal cravings of the flesh were haunting you with their shameless clamour, and you disdained the divine fruits of that ecstasy in which I live, though shortening my life.'

'Your exaltation, my dear Vendramin,' replied Emilio, calmly, 'is still beneath reality. Who can describe that purely physical exhaustion in which we are left by the abuse of a dream of pleasure, leaving the soul still eternally craving, and the spirit in clear possession of its faculties?

'But I am weary of this torment, which is that of Tantalus. This is my last night on earth. After one final effort, our Mother shall have her child again — the Adriatic will silence my last sigh ——'

'Are you idiotic?' cried Vendramin. 'No; you are mad; for madness, the crisis we despise, is the memory of an antecedent condition acting on our present state of being. The genius of my dreams has taught me that, and much else! You want to make one of the Duchess and la Tinti; nay, dear Emilio, take them separately; it will be far wiser. Raphael alone ever united form and idea. You want to be the Raphael of love; but chance cannot be commanded. Raphael was a "fluke" of God's creation, for He foreordained that form and idea should be antagonistic; otherwise nothing could live. When the first cause

is more potent than the outcome, nothing comes of it. We must live either on earth or in the skies. Remain in the skies; it is always too soon to come down to earth.'

'I will take the Duchess home,' said the Prince, 'and make a last attempt — afterwards?'

'Afterwards,' cried Vendramin, anxiously, 'promise to call for me at Florian's.'

'I will.'

This dialogue, in modern Greek, with which Vendramin and Emilio were familiar, as many Venetians are, was unintelligible to the Duchess and to the Frenchman. Although he was quite outside the little circle that held the Duchess, Emilio and Vendramin together — for these three understood each other by means of Italian glances, by turns arch and keen, or veiled and sidelong — the physician at last discerned part of the truth. An earnest entreaty from the Duchess had prompted Vendramin's suggestion to Emilio, for Massamilla had begun to suspect the misery endured by her lover in that cold empyrean where he was wandering, though she had no suspicions of la Tinti.

'These two young men are mad!' said the doctor.

'As to the Prince,' said the Duchess, 'trust me to cure him. As to Vendramin, if he cannot understand this sublime music, he is perhaps incurable.'

'If you would but tell me the cause of their madness, I could cure them,' said the Frenchman.

'And since when have great physicians ceased to read men's minds?' said she, jestingly.

The ballet was long since ended; the second act of *Mosè* was beginning. The pit was perfectly attentive. A rumour had got abroad that Duke Cataneo had lectured Genovese, representing to him what injury he was doing to Clarina, the *diva* of the day. The second act would certainly be magnificent.

'The Egyptian Prince and his father are on the stage,'

said the Duchess. 'They have yielded once more, though insulting the Hebrews, but they are trembling with rage. The father congratulates himself on his son's approaching marriage, and the son is in despair at this fresh obstacle, though it only increases his love, to which everything is opposed. Genovese and Carthagenova are singing admirably. As you see, the tenor is making his peace with the house. How well he brings out the beauty of the music! The phrase given out by the son on the tonic, and repeated by the father on the dominant, is all in character with the simple, serious scheme which prevails throughout the score; the sobriety of it makes the endless variety of the music all the more wonderful. All Egypt is there.

'I do not believe that there is in modern music a composition more perfectly noble. The solemn and majestic paternity of a king is fully expressed in that magnificent theme, in harmony with the grand style that stamps the opera throughout. The idea of a Pharaoh's son pouring out his sorrows on his father's bosom could surely not be more admirably represented than in this grand imagery. Do you not yourself feel a sense of the splendour we are wont to attribute to that monarch of antiquity?'

'It is indeed sublime music,' said the Frenchman.

'The air *Pace mia smarrita*, which the Queen will now sing, is one of those *bravura* songs which every composer is compelled to introduce, though they mar the general scheme of the work; but an opera would as often as not never see the light, if the prima donna's vanity were not duly flattered. Still, this musical "sop" is so fine in itself that it is performed as written, on every stage; it is so brilliant that the leading lady does not substitute her favourite show piece, as is very commonly done in operas.

'And now comes the most striking movement in the score: the duet between Osiride and Elcia in the subter-

ranean chamber where he has hidden her to keep her from the departing Israelites, and to fly with her himself from Egypt. The lovers are then intruded on by Aaron, who has been to warn Amalthea, and we get the grandest of all quartettes: *Mi manca la voce*, *mi sento morire*. This is one of those masterpieces that will survive in spite of time, that destroyer of fashion in music, for it speaks the language of the soul which can never change. Mozart holds his own by the famous *finale* to *Don Giovanni;* Marcello, by his psalm, *Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei;* Cimarosa, by the air *Pria che spunti;* Beethoven by his C minor symphony; Pergolesi, by his *Stabat Mater;* Rossini will live by *Mi manca la voce.* What is most to be admired in Rossini is his command of variety of form; to produce the effect here required, he has had recourse to the old structure of the canon in unison, to bring the voices in, and merge them in the same melody. As the form of these sublime melodies was new, he set them in an old frame; and to give it the more relief he has silenced the orchestra, accompanying the voices with the harps alone. It is impossible to show greater ingenuity of detail, or to produce a grander general effect.—Dear me! again an outbreak!' said the Duchess.

Genovese, who had sung his duet with Carthagenova so well, was caricaturing himself now that la Tinti was on the stage. From a great singer he sank to the level of the most worthless chorus singer.

The most formidable uproar arose that had ever echoed to the roof of the *Fenice.* The commotion only yielded to Clarina, and she, furious at the difficulties raised by Genovese's obstinacy, sang *Mi manca la voce* as it will never be sung again. The enthusiasm was tremendous; the audience forgot their indignation and rage in pleasure that was really acute.

'She floods my soul with purple glow!' said Capraja, waving his hand in benediction at la *Diva* Tinti.

'Heaven send all its blessings on your head!' cried a gondolier.

'Pharaoh will now revoke his commands,' said the Duchess, while the commotion in the pit was calming down. 'Moses will overwhelm him, even on his throne, by declaring the death of every first-born son in Egypt, singing that strain of vengeance which augurs thunders from heaven, while above it the Hebrew clarions ring out. But you must clearly understand that this air is by Pacini; Carthagenova introduces it instead of that by Rossini. This air, *Paventa*, will no doubt hold its place in the score; it gives a bass too good an opportunity for displaying the quality of his voice, and expression here will carry the day rather than science. However, the air is full of magnificent menace, and it is possible that we may not be long allowed to hear it.'

A thunder of clapping and bravos hailed the song, followed by deep and cautious silence; nothing could be more significant or more thoroughly Venetian than the outbreak and its sudden suppression.

'I need say nothing of the coronation march announcing the enthronement of Osiride, intended by the King as a challenge to Moses; to hear it is enough. Their famous Beethoven has written nothing grander. And this march, full of earthly pomp, contrasts finely with the march of the Israelites. Compare them, and you will see that the music is full of purpose.

'Elcia declares her love in the presence of the two Hebrew leaders, and then renounces it in the fine *aria*, *Porge la destra amata*. (Place your beloved hand) Ah! What anguish! Only look at the house!'

The pit was shouting *bravo*, when Genovese left the stage.

'Now, free from her deplorable lover, we shall hear Tinti sing, *O desolata Elcia*—the tremendous *cavatina* expressive of love disapproved by God.'

'Where art thou, Rossini?' cried Cataneo. 'If he could but hear the music created by his genius so magnificently performed,' he went on. 'Is not Clarina worthy of him?' he asked Capraja. 'To give life to those notes by such gusts of flame, starting from the lungs and feeding in the air on some unknown matter which our ears inhale, and which bears us heavenwards in a rapture of love, she must be divine!'

'She is like the gorgeous Indian plant, which deserting the earth absorbs invisible nourishment from the atmosphere, and sheds from its spiral white blossom such fragrant vapours as fill the brain with dreams,' replied Capraja.

On being recalled, la Tinti appeared alone. She was received with a storm of applause; a thousand kisses were blown to her from finger-tips; she was pelted with roses, and a wreath was made of the flowers snatched from the ladies' caps, almost all sent out from Paris.

The *cavatina* was encored.

'How eagerly Capraja, with his passion for embellishments, must have looked forward to this air, which derives all its value from execution,' remarked Massimilla. 'Here Rossini has, so to speak, given the reins over to the singer's fancy. Her *cadenzas* and her feeling are everything. With a poor voice or inferior execution, it would be nothing — the throat is responsible for the effects of this *aria*.

'The singer has to express the most intense anguish, — that of a woman who sees her lover dying before her very eyes. La Tinti makes the house ring with her highest notes; and Rossini, to leave pure singing free to do its utmost, has written it in the simplest, clearest style. Then, as a crowning effort, he has composed those heart-rending musical cries: *Tormenti! Affanni! Smanie!* What grief, what anguish, in those runs. And la Tinti, you see, has quite carried the house off its feet.'

The Frenchman, bewildered by this adoring admiration

throughout a vast theatre for the source of its delight, here had a glimpse of genuine Italian nature. But neither the Duchess nor the two young men paid any attention to the ovation. Clarina began again.

The Duchess feared that she was seeing her Emilio for the last time. As to the Prince: in the presence of the Duchess, the sovereign divinity who lifted him to the skies, he had forgotten where he was, he no longer heard the voice of the woman who had initiated him into the mysteries of earthly pleasure, for deep dejection made his ears tingle with a chorus of plaintive voices, half-drowned in a rushing noise as of pouring rain.

Vendramin saw himself in an ancient Venetian costume, looking on at the ceremony of the *Bucentaur*. The Frenchman, who plainly discerned that some strange and painful mystery stood between the Prince and the Duchess, was racking his brain with shrewd conjecture to discover what it could be.

The scene had changed. In front of a fine picture, representing the Desert and the Red Sea, the Egyptians and Hebrews marched and countermarched without any effect on the feelings of the four persons in the Duchess's box. But when the first chords on the harps preluded the hymn of the delivered Israelites, the Prince and Vendramin rose and stood leaning against the opposite sides of the box, and the Duchess, resting her elbow on the velvet ledge, supported her head on her left hand.

The Frenchman, understanding from this little stir, how important this justly famous chorus was in the opinion of the house, listened with devout attention.

The audience, with one accord, shouted for its repetition.

'I feel as if I were celebrating the liberation of Italy,' thought a Milanese.

'Such music lifts up bowed heads, and revives hope in the most torpid,' said a man from the Romagna.

'In this scene,' said Massimilla, whose emotion was

evident, 'science is set aside. Inspiration, alone, dictated this masterpiece; it rose from the composer's soul like a cry of love! As to the accompaniment, it consists of the harps; the orchestra appears only at the last repetition of that heavenly strain. Rossini can never rise higher than in this prayer; he will do as good work, no doubt, but never better: the sublime is always equal to itself; but this hymn is one of the things that will always be sublime. The only match for such a conception might be found in the psalms of the great Marcello, a noble Venetian, who was to music what Giotto was to painting. The majesty of the phrase, unfolding itself with episodes of inexhaustible melody, is comparable with the finest things ever invented by religious writers.

'How simple is the structure! Moses opens the attack in G minor, ending in a cadenza in B flat which allows the chorus to come in, *pianissimo* at first, in B flat, returning by modulations to G minor. This splendid treatment of the voices, recurring three times, ends in the last strophe with a *stretto* in G major of absolutely overpowering effect. We feel as though this hymn of a nation released from slavery, as it mounts to heaven, were met by kindred strains falling from the higher spheres. The stars respond with joy to the ecstasy of liberated mortals. The rounded fulness of the rhythm, the deliberate dignity of the gradations leading up to the outbursts of thanksgiving, and its slow return raise heavenly images in the soul. Could you not fancy that you saw heaven open, angels holding sistrums of gold, prostrate seraphs swinging their fragrant censers, and the archangels leaning on the flaming swords with which they have vanquished the heathen?

'The secret of this music and its refreshing effect on the soul is, I believe, that of a very few works of human genius; it carries us for the moment into the infinite; we feel it within us; we see it, in those melodies as boundless as the hymns sung round the throne of God. Rossini's

genius carries us up to prodigious heights, whence we look down on a promised land, and our eyes, charmed by heavenly light, gaze into limitless space. Elcia's last strain, having almost recovered from her grief, brings a feeling of earth-born passion into this hymn of thanksgiving. This, again, is a touch of genius.

'Aye, sing!' exclaimed the Duchess, as she listened to the last stanza with the same gloomy enthusiasm as the singers threw into it. 'Sing! You are free!'

The words were spoken in a voice that startled the physician. To divert Massimilla from her bitter reflections, while the excitement of recalling la Tinti was at its height, he engaged her in one of the arguments in which the French excel.

'Madame,' said he, 'in explaining this grand work — which I shall come to hear again to-morrow with a fuller comprehension, thanks to you, of its structure and its effect — you have frequently spoken of the colour of the music, and of the ideas it depicts; now I, as an analyst, a materialist, must confess that I have always rebelled against the affectation of certain enthusiasts, who try to make us believe that music paints with tones. Would it not be the same thing if Raphael's admirers spoke of his singing with colours?'

'In the language of musicians,' replied the Duchess, '*painting* is arousing certain associations in our souls, or certain images in our brain; and these memories and images have a colour of their own; they are sad or cheerful. You are battling for a word, that is all. According to Capraja, each instrument has its task, its mission, and appeals to certain ideas, just as each colour is associated with certain feelings in our souls. Does a pattern in gold on a blue ground produce the same sensations in you as a red pattern on black or green? In these, as in music, there are no figures, no expression of feeling; they are purely artistic, and yet no one looks at them with indif-

ference. Has not the oboe the peculiar tone that we associate with the open country, in common with most wind instruments? The brass suggests martial ideas, and rouses us to vehement or even somewhat furious feelings. The strings, for which the material is derived from the organic world, seem to appeal to the subtlest fibres of our nature; they go to the very depths of the heart. When I spoke of the gloomy hue, and the coldness of the tones in the introduction to *Mosè*, was I not fully as much justified as your critics are when they speak of the "colour" in a writer's language? Do you not acknowledge that there is a nervous style, a pallid style, a lively, and a highly-coloured style? Art can paint with words, sounds, colours, lines, form; the means are many; the result is one.

'An Italian architect might give us the same sensation that is produced in us by the introduction to *Mosè*, by constructing a walk through dark, damp avenues of tall, thick trees, and bringing us out suddenly in a valley full of streams, flowers, and mills, and basking in the sunshine. In their greatest moments the arts are but the expression of the grand scenes of nature.

'I am not learned enough to enlarge on the philosophy of music; go and talk to Capraja; you will be amazed at what he can tell you. He will say that every instrument that depends on the touch or breath of man for its expression and length of note, is superior as a vehicle of expression to colour, which remains fixed, or speech, which has its limits. The language of music is infinite; it includes everything; it can express all things.

'Now do you see wherein lies the preëminence of the work you have just heard? I can explain it in a few words. There are two kinds of music: one, petty, poor, second-rate, always the same, based on a hundred or so of phrases which every musician has at his command, a more or less agreeable form of babble which most composers live in. We listen to their strains, their would-be melodies,

with more or less satisfaction, but absolutely nothing is left in our mind; by the end of a century they are forgotten. But the nations, from the beginning of time till our own day, have cherished as a precious treasure certain strains which epitomise their instincts and habits; I might almost say their history. Listen to one of these primitive tones, — the Gregorian chant, for instance, is, in sacred song, the inheritance of the earliest peoples, — and you will lose yourself in deep dreaming. Strange and immense conceptions will unfold within you, in spite of the extreme simplicity of these rudimentary relics. And once or twice in a century — not oftener, there arises a Homer of music, to whom God grants the gift of being ahead of his age; men who can compact melodies full of accomplished facts, pregnant with mighty poetry. Think of this; remember it. The thought, repeated by you, will prove fruitful; it is melody, not harmony, that can survive the shocks of time.

'The music of this oratorio contains a whole world of great and sacred things. A work which begins with that introduction and ends with that prayer is immortal — as immortal as the Easter hymn, *O filii et filiæ*, as the *Dies iræ* of the dead, as all the songs which in every land have outlived its splendour, its happiness, and its ruined prosperity.'

The tears the Duchess wiped away as she quitted her box showed plainly that she was thinking of the Venice that is no more; and Vendramin kissed her hand.

The performance ended with the most extraordinary chaos of noises: abuse and hisses hurled at Genovese and a fit of frenzy in praise of la Tinti. It was a long time since the Venetians had had so lively an evening. They were warmed and revived by that antagonism which is never lacking in Italy, where the smallest towns always throve on the antagonistic interests of two factions: the Guelfs and Ghibellines everywhere; the Capulets and the Montagues at Verona; the Geremei and the Lomelli at

Bologna; the Fieschi and the Doria at Genoa; the patricians and the populace, the Senate and tribunes of the Roman republic; the Pazzi and the Medici at Florence; the Sforza and the Visconti at Milan; the Orsini and the Colonna at Rome, — in short, everywhere and on every occasion there has been the same impulse.

Out in the streets there were already *Genovists* and *Tintists.*

The Prince escorted the Duchess, more depressed than ever by the loves of Osiride; she feared some similar disaster to her own, and could only cling to Emilio, as if to keep him next her heart.

'Remember your promise,' said Vendramin. 'I will wait for you in the square.'

Vendramin took the Frenchman's arm, proposing that they should walk together on the Piazza San Marco while awaiting the Prince.

'I shall be only too glad if he should not come,' he added.

This was the text for a conversation between the two, Vendramin regarding it as a favourable opportunity for consulting the physician, and telling him the singular position Emilio had placed himself in.

The Frenchman did as every Frenchman does on all occasions: he laughed. Vendramin, who took the matter very seriously, was angry; but he was mollified when the disciple of Majendie, of Cuvier, of Dupuytren, and of Brossais assured him that he believed he could cure the Prince of his high-flown raptures, and dispel the heavenly poetry in which he shrouded Massimilla as in a cloud.

'A happy form of misfortune!' said he. 'The ancients, who were not such fools as might be inferred from their crystal heaven and their ideas on physics, symbolised in the fable of Ixion the power which nullifies the body and makes the spirit lord of all.'

Vendramin and the doctor presently met Genovese, and with him the fantastic Capraja. The melomaniac was anxious to learn the real cause of the tenor's *fiasco*. Genovese, the question being put to him, talked fast, like all men who can intoxicate themselves by the ebullition of ideas suggested to them by a passion.

'Yes, Signori, I love her, I worship her with a frenzy of which I never believed myself capable, now that I am tired of women. Women play the mischief with art. Pleasure and work cannot be carried on together. Clara fancies that I was jealous of her success, that I wanted to hinder her triumph at Venice; but I was clapping in the side-scenes, and shouted *Diva* louder than any one in the house.'

'But even that,' said Cataneo, joining them, 'does not explain why, from being a divine singer, you should have become one of the most execrable performers who ever piped air through his larynx, giving none of the charm even which enchants and bewitches us.'

'I!' said the singer. 'I a bad singer! I who am the equal of the greatest performers!'

By this time, the doctor and Vendramin, Capraja, Cataneo, and Genovese had made their way to the piazzetta. It was midnight. The glittering bay, outlined by the churches of San Giorgio and San Paulo at the end of the Giudecca, and the beginning of the Grand Canal, that opens so mysteriously under the *Dogana* and the church of Santa Maria della Salute, lay glorious and still. The moon shone on the barques along the Riva de' Schiavoni. The waters of Venice, where there is no tide, looked as if they were alive, dancing with a myriad spangles. Never had a singer a more splendid stage.

Genovese, with an emphatic flourish, seemed to call Heaven and Earth to witness; and then, with no accompaniment but the lapping waves, he sang *Ombra adorata*, Crescentini's great air. The song, rising up between the

statues of San Teodoro and San Giorgio, in the heart of sleeping Venice lighted by the moon, the words, in such strange harmony with the scene, and the melancholy passion of the singer, held the Italians and the Frenchman spellbound.

At the very first notes, Vendramin's face was wet with tears. Capraja stood as motionless as one of the statues in the ducal palace. Cataneo seemed moved to some feeling. The Frenchman, taken by surprise, was meditative, like a man of science in the presence of a phenomenon that upsets all his fundamental axioms. These four minds, all so different, whose hopes were so small, who believed in nothing for themselves or after themselves, who regarded their own existence as that of a transient and fortuitous being, — like the little life of a plant or a beetle, — had a glimpse of Heaven. Never did music more truly merit the epithet divine. The consoling notes, as they were poured out, enveloped their souls in soft and soothing airs. On these vapours, almost visible, as it seemed to the listeners, like the marble shapes about them in the silver moonlight, angels sat whose wings, devoutly waving, expressed adoration and love. The simple, artless melody penetrated to the soul as with a beam of light. It was a holy passion!

But the singer's vanity roused them from their emotion with a terrible shock.

'Now, am I a bad singer?' he exclaimed, as he ended.

His audience only regretted that the instrument was not a thing of Heaven. This angelic song was then no more than the outcome of a man's offended vanity! The singer felt nothing, thought nothing, of the pious sentiments and divine images he could create in others, — no more, in fact, than Paganini's violin knows what the player makes it utter. What they had seen in fancy was Venice lifting its shroud and singing — and it was merely the result of a tenor's *fiasco!*

'Can you guess the meaning of such a phenomenon?' the Frenchman asked of Capraja, wishing to make him talk, as the Duchess had spoken of him as a profound thinker.

'What phenomenon?' said Capraja.

'Genovese—who is admirable in the absence of la Tinti, and when he sings with her is a braying ass.'

'He obeys an occult law of which one of your chemists might perhaps give you the mathematical formula, and which the next century will no doubt express in a statement full of *x*, *a*, and *b*, mixed up with little algebraic signs, bars, and quirks that give me the colic; for the finest conceptions of mathematics do not add much to the sum total of our enjoyment.

'When an artist is so unfortunate as to be full of the passion he wishes to express, he cannot depict it because he is the thing itself instead of its image. Art is the work of the brain, not of the heart. When you are possessed by a subject you are a slave, not a master; you are like a king besieged by his people. Too keen a feeling, at the moment when you want to represent that feeling, causes an insurrection of the senses against the governing faculty.'

'Might we not convince ourselves of this by some further experiment?' said the doctor.

'Cataneo, you might bring your tenor and the prima donna together again,' said Capraja to his friend.

'Well, gentlemen,' said the Duke, 'come to sup with me. We ought to reconcile the tenor and la Clarina; otherwise the season will be ruined in Venice.'

The invitation was accepted.

'Gondoliers!' called Cataneo.

'One minute,' said Vendramin. 'Memmi is waiting for me at Florian's; I cannot leave him to himself. We must make him tipsy to-night, or he will kill himself to-morrow.'

'*Corpo santo!*' exclaimed the Duke. 'I must keep that

young fellow alive, for the happiness and future prospects of my race. I will invite him, too.'

They all went back to Florian's, where the assembled crowd were holding an eager and stormy discussion to which the tenor's arrival put an end. In one corner, near a window looking out on the colonnade, gloomy, with a fixed gaze and rigid attitude, Emilio was a dismal image of despair.

'That crazy fellow,' said the physician, in French, to Vendramin, 'does not know what he wants. Here is a man who can make of a Massimilla Doni a being apart from the rest of creation, possessing her in heaven, amid ideal splendour such as no power on earth can make real. He can behold his mistress for ever sublime and pure; can always hear within him what we have just heard on the seashore; can always live in the light of a pair of eyes which create for him the warm and golden glow that surrounds the Virgin in Titian's Assumption, — after Raphael had invented it or had it revealed to him for the Transfiguration, — and this man only longs to smirch the poem.

'By my advice he must needs combine his sensual joys and his heavenly adoration in one woman. In short, like all the rest of us, he will have a mistress. He had a divinity, and the wretched creature insists on her being a female! I assure you, Monsieur, he is resigning heaven. I will not answer for it that he may not ultimately die of despair.

'O ye women's faces, delicately outlined in a pure and radiant oval, reminding us of those creations of art where it has most successfully competed with nature! Divine feet that cannot walk, slender forms that an earthly breeze would break, shapes too frail ever to conceive, virgins that we dreamed of as we grew out of childhood, admired in secret, and adored without hope, veiled in the beams of some unwearying desire, — maids whom we may never see again, but whose smile remains supreme in our life, what

hog of Epicurus could insist on dragging you down to the mire of this earth!

'The sun, Monsieur, gives light and heat to the world, only because it is at a distance of thirty-three millions of leagues. Get nearer to it, and science warns you that it is not really hot or luminous, — for science is of some use,' he added, looking at Capraja.

'Not so bad for a Frenchman and a doctor,' said Capraja, patting the foreigner on the shoulder. 'You have in those words explained the thing which Europeans least understand in all Dante: his Beatrice. Yes, Beatrice, that ideal figure, the queen of the poet's fancies, chosen above all the elect, consecrated with tears, deified by memory, and for ever young in the presence of ineffectual desire!'

'Prince,' said the Duke to Emilio, 'come and sup with me. You cannot refuse the poor Neapolitan whom you have robbed both of his wife and of his mistress.'

This broad Neapolitan jest, spoken with an aristocratic good manner, made Emilio smile; he allowed the Duke to take his arm and lead him away.

Cataneo had already sent a messenger to his house from the café.

As the Palazzo Memmi was on the Grand Canal, not far from Santa Marie della Salute, the way thither on foot was round by the Rialto, or it could be reached in a gondola. The four guests would not separate and preferred to walk; the Duke's infirmities obliged him to get into his gondola.

At about two in the morning anybody passing the Memmi palace would have seen light pouring out of every window across the Grand Canal, and have heard the delightful overture to *Semiramide* performed at the foot of the steps by the orchestra of the *Fenice*, as a serenade to la Tinti.

The company were at supper in the second floor gallery. From the balcony la Tinti in return sang Almavida's *Buona*

sera from *Il Barbiere*, while the Duke's steward distributed payment from his master to the poor artists and bid them to dinner the next day, such civilities as are expected of grand signors who protect singers, and of fine ladies who protect tenors and basses. In these cases there is nothing for it but to marry all the *corps de théâtre*.

Cataneo did things handsomely; he was the manager's banker, and this season was costing him two thousand crowns.

He had had all the palace furnished, had imported a French cook, and wines of all lands. So the supper was a regal entertainment.

The Prince, seated next la Tinti, was keenly alive all through the meal, to what poets in every language call the darts of love. The transcendental vision of Massimilla was eclipsed, just as the idea of God is sometimes hidden by clouds of doubt in the consciousness of solitary thinkers. Clarina thought herself the happiest woman in the world as she perceived Emilio was in love with her. Confident of retaining him, her joy was reflected in her features, her beauty was so dazzling that the men, as they lifted their glasses, could not resist bowing to her with instinctive admiration.

'The Duchess is not to compare with la Tinti,' said the Frenchman, forgetting his theory under the fire of the Sicilian's eyes.

The tenor ate and drank languidly; he seemed to care only to identify himself with the prima donna's life, and had lost the hearty sense of enjoyment which is characteristic of Italian men singers.

'Come, Signorina,' said the Duke, with an imploring glance at Clarina, 'and you, *caro primo uomo*,' he added to Genovese, 'unite your voices in one perfect sound. Let us have the C of *Qual portento*, when light appears in the oratorio we have just heard, to convince my old friend Capraja of the superiority of unison to any embellishment.

'I will carry her off from that Prince she is in love with; for she adores him — it stares me in the face!' said Genovese to himself.

What was the amazement of the guests who had heard Genovese out of doors, when he began to bray, to coo, mew, squeal, gargle, bellow, thunder, bark, shriek, even produce sounds which could only be described as a hoarse rattle, — in short, go through an incomprehensible farce, while his face was transfigured with rapturous expression like that of a martyr, as painted by Zurbaran or Murillo, Titian or Raphael. The general shout of laughter changed to almost tragical gravity when they saw that Genovese was in utter earnest. La Tinti understood that her companion was in love with her, and had spoken the truth on the stage, the land of falsehood.

'*Poverino!*' she murmured, stroking the Prince's hand under the table.

'By all that is holy!' cried Capraja, 'will you tell me what score you are reading at this moment — murdering Rossini? Pray inform us what you are thinking about, what demon is struggling in your throat.'

'A demon!' cried Genovese, 'say rather the god of music. My eyes, like those of Saint-Cecilia, can see angels, who, pointing with their fingers, guide me along the lines of the score which is written in notes of fire, and I am trying to keep up with them. PER DIO! do you not understand? The feeling that inspires me has passed into my being; it fills my heart and my lungs; my soul and throat have but one life.

'Have you never, in a dream, listened to the most glorious strains, the ideas of unknown composers who have made use of pure sound as nature has hidden it in all things, — sound which we call forth, more or less perfectly, by the instruments we employ to produce masses of various colour; but which in those dream-concerts are heard free from the imperfections of the performers who cannot be all

feeling, all soul? And I, I give you that perfection, and you abuse me!

'You are as mad as the pit of the *Fenice*, who hissed me! I scorned the vulgar crowd for not being able to mount with me to the heights whence we reign over art, and I appeal to men of mark, to a Frenchman — Why, he is gone!'

'Half an hour ago,' said Vendramin.

'That is a pity. He, perhaps, would have understood me, since Italians, lovers of art, do not ——'

'On you go!' said Capraja, with a smile, and tapping lightly on the tenor's head. 'Ride off on the divine Ariosto's hippogriff; hunt down your radiant chimera, musical visionary as you are!'

In point of fact, all the others, believing that Genovese was drunk, let him talk without listening to him. Capraja alone had understood the case put by the French physician.

While the wine of Cyprus was loosening every tongue, and each one was prancing on his favourite hobby, the doctor, in a gondola, was waiting for the Duchess, having sent her a note written by Vendramin. Massimilla appeared in her night wrapper, so much had she been alarmed by the tone of the Prince's farewell, and so startled by the hopes held out by the letter.

'Madame,' said the Frenchman, as he placed her in a seat and desired the gondoliers to start, 'at this moment Prince Emilio's life is in danger, and you alone can save him.'

'What is to be done?' she asked.

'Ah! Can you resign yourself to play a degrading part — in spite of the noblest face to be seen in Italy? Can you drop from the blue sky where you dwell, into the bed of a courtesan? In short, can you, an angel of refinement, of pure and spotless beauty, condescend to imagine what the love must be of a Tinti — in her room, and so

effectually as to deceive the ardour of Emilio, who is indeed too drunk to be very clear-sighted ? '

'Is that all ? ' said she, with a smile that betrayed to the Frenchman a side he had not as yet perceived of the delightful nature of an Italian woman in love. 'I will out-do la Tinti, if need be, to save my friend's life.'

'And you will thus fuse into one two kinds of love, which he sees as distinct — divided by a mountain of poetic fancy, that will melt away like the snow on a glacier under the beams of the midsummer sun.'

'I shall be eternally your debtor,' said the Duchess, gravely.

When the French doctor returned to the gallery, where the orgy had by this time assumed the stamp of Venetian frenzy, he had a look of satisfaction which the Prince, absorbed by la Tinti, failed to observe; he was promising himself a repetition of the intoxicating delights he had known. La Tinti, a true Sicilian, was floating on the tide of a fantastic passion on the point of being gratified.

The doctor whispered a few words to Vendramin, and la Tinti was uneasy.

'What are you plotting ? ' she inquired of the Prince's friend.

'Are you kind-hearted ? ' said the doctor in her ear, with the sternness of an operator.

The words pierced to her comprehension like a dagger-thrust to her heart.

'It is to save Emilio's life,' added Vendramin.

'Come here,' said the doctor to Clarina.

The hapless singer rose and went to the other end of the table where, between Vendramin and the Frenchman, she looked like a criminal between the confessor and the executioner.

She struggled for a long time, but yielded at last for love of Emilio.

The doctor's last words were, —

'And you must cure Genovese!'

She spoke a word to the tenor as she went round the table. She returned to the Prince, put her arm round his neck and kissed his hair with an expression of despair which struck Vendramin and the Frenchman, the only two who had their wits about them, then she vanished into her room. Emilio, seeing Genovese leave the table, while Cataneo and Capraja were absorbed in a long musical discussion, stole to the door of the bedroom, lifted the curtain, and skipped in, like an eel into the mud.

'But you see, Cataneo,' said Capraja, 'you have exacted the last drop of physical enjoyment, and there you are, hanging on a wire like a cardboard harlequin, patterned with scars, and never moving unless the string is pulled of a perfect unison.'

'And you, Capraja, who have squeezed ideas dry, are not you in the same predicament? Do not you live riding the hobby of a *cadenza?*'

'I? I possess the whole world!' cried Capraja, with a sovereign gesture of his hand.

'And I have devoured it!' replied the Duke.

They observed that the physician and Vendramin were gone, and that they were alone.

Next morning, after a night of perfect happiness, the Prince's sleep was disturbed by a dream. He felt on his heart the trickle of pearls, dropped there by an angel: he woke, and found himself bathed in the tears of Massimilla Doni. He was lying in her arms, and she gazed at him as he slept.

That evening, at the *Fenice*, — though la Tinti had not allowed him to rise till two in the afternoon, which is said to be very bad for a tenor voice, — Genovese sang divinely in his part in *Semiramide*. He was recalled with la Tinti, fresh crowns were given, the pit was wild with delight;

the tenor no longer attempted to charm the prima donna by angelic methods.

Vendramin was the only person whom the doctor could not cure. Love for a country that has ceased to be is a love beyond curing. The young Venetian, by dint of living in his thirteenth century republic, and in the arms of that pernicious courtesan called opium, when he found himself in the work-a-day world to which reaction brought him, succumbed, pitied and regretted by his friends.

Now, how shall the end of this adventure be told — for it is too disastrously domestic. A word will be enough for the worshippers of the ideal.

The Duchess was expecting an infant.

The Peris, the naiads, the fairies, the sylphs of ancient legend, the Muses of Greece, the Marble Virgins of the Certosa at Pavia, the Day and Night of Michael Angelo, the little Angels which Bellini was the first to put at the foot of his Church pictures, and which Raphael painted so divinely in his Virgin with the Donor, and the Madonna who shivers at Dresden, the lovely Maidens by Orcagna in the Church of San-Michee, at Florence, the celestial choir round the Tomb in Saint-Sebaldus, at Nuremberg, the Virgins of the Duomo, at Milan, the whole population of a hundred Gothic Cathedrals, all the race of beings who burst their mould to visit you, great imaginative artists — all these angelic and disembodied maidens gathered round Massimilla's bed, and wept!

PARIS, *May 25th, 1839.*

